

# MEXICAN MARTYRDOM

**FIRSTHAND ACCOUNTS OF THE  
RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN MEXICO  
1926-1935**

REV. WILFRID  
PARSONS



# **Mexican Martyrdom**

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

For a proper understanding of the historical roots of *Mexican Martyrdom*, the reader is referred to *Blood-Drenched Altars—A Catholic Commentary on the History of Mexico*, by Most Reverend Francis Clement Kelley, originally published by Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1935 and reprinted by TAN Books and Publishers, Inc. in 1987. (Copies are available through local bookstores or direct from the Publisher.)

From the pages of Bishop Kelley's enlightening book comes the insight that the Great Mexican Revolution, unleashed in 1810 by the "Catholic" priest Miguel Hidalgo and culminating in the rule of Plutarco Elias Calles in 1928, never really varied in character throughout its long history and that it was always violently anti-Catholic and left-leaning.

Except for the 35-year interlude of strongman Porfirio Diaz, from 1876 to 1911, when the Catholic Church was allowed to function without restraint and foreign investment was encouraged, the Great Mexican Revolution was pronouncedly anti-Catholic and socialist, characteristics which it still retains today. No priest or nun, for example, is allowed to appear in public in religious garb even to this day, and as recently as 1982, the Mexican government, ruled by the Party of Institutionalized Revolution, nationalized all the private banks in the country.

That President Calles (1924-1928), with his particular background, should persecute the Church in an open, bloody manner was simply an extension of the overall thrust of the Revolution and was a logical consequence of the Constitution of 1917 and the terribly bloody history of the Revolution from its very inception.

Interesting to note, of course, is the fact that, in a country estimated at some 97% Catholic, an anti-Catholic government rules; also, that despite complete control of all the economic and political forces in the country, the one-party, semi-socialist government still cannot seem to provide a prosperous economy for its people.

Almost all of today's reference books and most history books about Mexico paint the Spanish colonial period, 1521 to 1821, as an age of ignorance, repression, poverty, slavery and general deterioration of culture, but the era of the Revolution, 1810 to the present, as one of progress, enlightenment, freedom and prosperity. *Blood-Drenched Altars* proves just the opposite to be true, and *Mexican Martyrdom* is a strong exclamation mark in support of that thesis. Let the reader peruse these two books and decide for himself on which side lies the truth.

Thomas A. Nelson  
Publisher



## FOREWORD

THIS BOOK is an attempt to illustrate by a recital of facts the nature of a struggle that has gone on in a neighboring country for the past ten years. It is not a controversial work, still less is it a work of scholarship on the Mexican situation. It is not an historical account of all Mexican events. It is designed to give the reader as vivid a picture as possible of how the Mexican people have lived during that time, particularly if they took sides with the Church in the struggle. It is frankly written with sympathy for these Mexicans, though a sincere effort has been made to understand and to present the point of view of those who are opposed to them.

A word should be said about the sources of the many narratives of incidents throughout the book. Since the book is not a scientific work of history, references have not generally been given, except with regard to quotations from books, and these quotations are nearly always restricted to writers who have generally been known as favorable to the Mexican Government. Many of the incidents related, as will be noticed, are personal experiences of the author, or were narrated to him at first hand by personages who have been involved in them. He stands sponsor for them. For the whole latter part of the book, after [Chapter XI](#), the author has been privileged to inspect the private archives of the Apostolic Delegate for Mexico, now in San Antonio, Texas. These archives consist of exhaustive reports made to the Papal representative by the Bishops or administrators of each of the Mexican dioceses, first, according to a general questionnaire they were required to answer, and secondly, according to monthly reports made since that. These archives are unpublished material, and are utilized by special permission. They are mentioned here once for all as authority for these chapters. The rest of what is narrated is of public knowledge.

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## CHAPTER I

### DILEMMA

THE TOWN OF IRAPUATO in the State of Guanajuato is a railroad junction where you either go straight on to Mexico City from Guadalajara in the West or change trains for the long ride north to Juarez and El Paso.

It is a lazy, dusty town, with only one hotel that I could see, and that not more inviting than any similar one in a similar town in the United States. Luncheon was a dreary, greasy plate of fried eggs, tasting of preservative, and lukewarm coffee that had stood since breakfast. It was soon finished, and there was nothing else to do but wander out to see what Irapuato had to show. It had very little—a sort of hopeless, routine kind of place, dirty, gray, and listless.

Yet in that town of Irapuato I had an experience that seemed to uncover for me the very mystery and soul of Mexico.

I was kneeling alone in the back of one of Irapuato's parish churches. The irregular stone floor was hard and uncomfortable; the gray of the walls was streaked with weather marks; faded banners of red and yellow straggled from the ceiling. A woman or two knelt here and there. While I knelt, feeling uneasy and vague, a side door opened, and a little Indian, about forty years old maybe, came in. He wore only his cotton trousers and jacket, his dusty bare feet grew into his leather sandals, the inevitable flaming serape was around his neck, his broad-brimmed hat in his hand.

He moved slowly to the middle of the church, knelt down, laid his hat carefully beside him, and suddenly leaned forward and kissed the floor. Then, upright and still kneeling, he stretched out his arms in the form of a cross. He knelt that way a long time, motionless.



Something made me want to see his face. I wandered up to the front of the church, to see the picture over the altar, and when I turned he was still there. I went back, and as I passed him looked into his face.

I will never forget his eyes. They were looking straight ahead; they did not see me at all. They were deep brown, almost black. They were not pleading, they did not flutter, but they were aflame. For just those few seconds I looked into a very ecstasy of devotion. When I left the church, he was still there where he knelt.

For hours I was under the spell of that little Indian. Years of reading, of study, of acquaintance with Mexicans, had always left me with the unsolved puzzle: can the Church be defeated in Mexico as it was defeated in England, in Sweden, in Prussia; as it was not defeated in Ireland, or in Poland? Can the Faith be wrenched out of a people's soul? It has been, in the past, more than once. Can it happen here, in Mexico? All the rest seemed to me to be futile wrangling. The heart of the debate is there, in the soul of Mexicans, not in newspapers, or legislative halls, or in dark and musty dungeons.

This, then, is what Mexico means. Will what I saw in the eyes of my Irapuato Indian ever die out and become only a meaningless stare? It seemed to me that it was worth examining; and it still seems to me to be a passionate inquiry.

Mexico, more than Russia, more than Spain, is a proving ground for human destiny. One hundred and fifty years ago, it was the very show place of Spanish civilization; it was New Spain. Beside its splendors of architecture, painting, sculpture, libraries, and lecture halls, the puny efforts of a century and a half in our own Colonies were like little backwoods villages of clapboard and shingles. When Spain left Mexico, it left behind a culture and what we mean by civilization that was as great as any country will ever have to show; the solid monuments are still there to show it, in thousands of churches, schools, halls, public buildings, and private homes. We still have a long way to go before we will have created all the beauty that was, and is, Mexico's.

Yet a hundred and twenty years ago, Mexico suddenly stopped growing; the Mexicans began to fight one another; so hardly a building of any size was erected or any piece of art created until Porfirio Diaz built many public edifices and Diego Rivera began to cover walls with Bolshevist propaganda. During all that time since then, there was one Enemy which the politicians who ruled the country feared and hated, one Thing which they despoiled and imprisoned by a web of laws, the Catholic Church. Even Porfirio Diaz in his twenty-seven successive years of autocratic rule never, in spite of much polemic literature to the contrary, allowed the Church as such more than a feeble, hand-to-mouth

existence.

And the result of it all is that in 1935 a Mexican Government announces that the one thing which above all else it fears, more than the foreign exploiters of oil and metals, more than the Gringo Government in Washington, is the same Catholic Church. Is it because they, too, have looked into Indian eyes and seen what I saw at Irapuato?

Every tourist in Mexico has looked curiously into eyes raised slowly to him, as he passes by green fields and through brown adobe villages, and has wondered what lies behind them. What secular memories smoulder there? How many masters have come and gone, and have not conquered! It is as if they just gave you one passing glance, and beneath was the unspoken thought:

"Ah, well, just another master. We have had many, and we will have others. Life is hard, but the sun and the ground are good. We can live, in spite of all."

And then the hard bare foot presses down on the ancient hoe, and the eternal toil to wrest a living from the soil goes on.

Thus live about four-fifths of the Mexican people, and have lived since long before the Spaniards came. Anybody who knows an Indian knows how impenetrable is the ultimate sanctuary of his mind. Heartbreaking attempts have been made to improve his lot. The missionaries succeeded in their day by respecting the old land-holding system of centuries before their coming, fighting a desperate and sometimes losing fight against insatiable Spanish colonists, and teaching their charges the arts and crafts of the Old World.

A first revolution was fought over the Indians, against a newer Spain, bursting with ideas that threatened to destroy, or at least radically change, the civilization that had grown up, half-Spanish, half-Indian. Now the latest revolution is in progress. Will it ever change the Mexican scene?

Once, early on a Sunday morning, I went down with Archbishop Diaz to Ayotzingo, a small hamlet not far from the dead volcano, Iztlacihuatl, for a Confirmation. We had to approach the place across rolling fields, since there was no road for an automobile. As we turned in off the highroad, the Archbishop had the car stopped, and began to put on his Episcopal robes (he was dressed in what we call clerical clothes; and we other priests, of course, in lay garb). His assistants remonstrated with him; he would get into trouble, it was against the law to appear thus in public, and so on. With a characteristic imperious gesture Archbishop Diaz brushed it all aside: "I am not going to my people dressed like a Protestant minister!"

Soon we were met by a dozen little girls, dressed in white, with baskets of flowers which, walking backwards, they strewed under the wheels of our car. Then a triumphal arch, in red, white, and green, the Mexican colors! Then a

group of men, shooting off skyrockets—*cohetes*. Those *cohetes*! The Archbishop, as so often, laughed at my apprehensions of them. You simply lighted one, held it in your hand until it began to whoosh, and then let it go; when it got to its ceiling, it went off with a tremendous bang; they must have had dynamite in them. All day, from ten to five, they went off, hundreds of them—in honor of the Archbishop. Outside the little church, an old and beautiful one in stone, with lovely carved decorations—just one of many thousands—played a band of twenty peasant musicians. It played all day, too; national songs, grand opera, marches, classical pieces, under the direction of an aged patriarch who had trained every member of the country troupe.

The Confirmations went on all day, too, all of little children under one year old, the old Spanish way. The offering was a copper piece worth about three mills—an ancient Mexican custom which has been turned by propagandists into a horrible example of how the clergy milk the people for their ministrations. Outside, the *cohetes* went off, the band played on, and I wandered along the rows of goods and foods spread out on bright cloths in the ante-churchyard, the usual ex-tempore Sunday-morning market; and ever and anon I entered the church—and meditated on the mystery of the Faith in these people's hearts. It was just a little oasis—or was it?—in the midst of the alarums and pursuits that are modern Mexico. Today certainly was no different from any other day, say, in 1689, when the ancestors of these same peasants met Archbishop Francisco de Aguiar in the very same way before the very same church which had the Sleeping Lady, covered with a blanket of snow, for a background. Is it any wonder that once in a while, a very frequent once in a while, the rulers of Mexico grow a little impatient?

Not every village, of course, has been so peaceful as that. Sometimes, the deeps are stirred when the rulers of Mexico grow a little too impatient, and then there is tragedy, and sometimes comedy.

For the truth is that the social revolution, which has as its professed aim the prosperity of the worker in the city and of the peon in the field, has from its very beginning been locked in a life-and-death struggle with the Church. Yet the same generous yearnings for social justice that have been stirred by Leo XIII and Pius XI have lifted both young and old hearts in Mexico among Catholics also. It is the tragedy of the country that a deadly rivalry for the hearts of its Indian population has halted any real progress to this day.

For there has been resistance to the plans of the Revolution.

How widespread, how deep, is it? Is it anything more than the unwillingness of an ancient population, part Indian, part half-breed, part white, to change its ways? The old unwillingness to give up the hand-drawn plow for

the tractor, the well for the irrigation ditch? Is the religious struggle different from that? These are the problems that this book is intended to face, to offer some light on that deeper problem that has never been studied from the inside. Will the Faith go along with the adoption of new ways of building, of planting and reaping, of manufacturing the goods that support life generally? Or is it possible for the two to grow together, the Faith more vigorous for having infused with its old spirit and traditions the newer external ways of living?

In one village in Sonora, in 1934, the teacher imposed, or tried to impose, on the Indian children the new rote of "*Uno, dos, uno, dos, no hay Dios*—One, two, there is no God; one, two, there is no God." But the children would have none of it. Every time the teacher repeated the words, they banged their desks and shouted "*Hay Dios*—There is a God!" And they wore her out. She gave up the struggle in despair.

In October, 1934, all priests were rounded up in the State of Chihuahua, but little by little, of course, they made their way back in disguise. No public service was allowed in any church, and many churches were closed. But ingenuity found a way. One priest writes that among the humble folk of the hamlet of —, particularly the men, he found his greatest consolation. By night, in an unobtrusive house, they came together, sometimes to the number of seventy, and there went to Confession and to Communion during Mass, while some of their number stood guard outside against a surprise. Another group, all of young men, found the same clandestine way of satisfying their soul's needs.

Lucky they were to have a priest. In Vera Cruz, things were more difficult. Some time ago the English Catholic press published a letter from an English Catholic lady who was on tour in the Caribbean. Arriving in Vera Cruz on a Sunday, she had landed and asked to be shown a church. Blank or frightened looks were all she got. Finally, one person took her aside, and said if she wanted to go to Communion, she should follow. She did, and by devious ways found herself in the second story of quite a pretentious house. There she entered a parlor, and saw several people kneeling devoutly. But no altar, no priest. Her enquiring look was answered by the order to go to a cabinet, open the door, "take out the ciborium, and give yourself Communion."

"Give it to myself!" she exclaimed.

"There is no other way. The priest gets here only occasionally for Mass. And the Pope has given us the dispensation to do it ourselves."

One can imagine the bewilderment, awe, and devotion with which this English lady found herself back in the catacombs. It was nothing unusual, of course, for the Mexicans. I have heard of the Blessed Sacrament being hidden in radios, medicine cabinets, book cases—wherever the pursuivants would not be

likely to look for it. The Pope gave the privilege on December 23, 1927.

There have even been Tarcisiuses and Pancratiuses. During the terrible days of 1927-29 the prisons were filled with Catholics. One of the prisoners in a certain place had a son aged six. This boy used to be allowed to visit him; and being a lively and attractive lad, won the love of even the jailers.

One day he came in as usual, passed his daily banter with the guards, danced and laughed among the prisoners, and as he passed among them put his hand inside his blouse—and gave each one Communion. Then with the same gay prancings, he left, as usual; but What he had left behind was more precious to the prisoners than life.

There is no difference, so far as I have noticed, at least outside of the south of Mexico, between the men and the women. One day I happened to be in the capital city of a State, which shall be nameless, where the Governor defied the Federal Government in the matter of the religious laws. To prove it, I need only mention that the Bishop of the place came to meet me in his car dressed in his Episcopal robes. That was perhaps necessary, for I was myself dressed in lay clothes and he might not have recognized me.

I spent the night in the chaplain's room at a convent, where the nuns—but that is another story. The next day, the Bishop's secretary took me around the town to show me the sights. We entered the Cathedral. Mass was going on. According to the usual Mexican custom, men were on the left and the women on the right as we entered. Both sides were filled. I turned to my companion:

"A feast day?"

"No;" he answered, "just the usual eight-o'clock Mass."

It is necessary to add that after the Mass the whole congregation trooped over to the altar of the Blessed Sacrament—it was the Cathedral, it will be remembered—and went to Communion.

As to whether I would have been recognized in my lay garb, however, which I wore according to the law, not to disguise myself (as a matter of fact, my cassock was too conspicuously in my bag, I felt, to pass any police inspection with comfort), I am not so sure.

One day a priest companion and myself arrived in the village which is beside that most glorious of resorts, Lake Pátzcuaro, both of us in lay clothes. The next day was Sunday, and therefore market day, and the village was filled with Indians from the surrounding country. As we walked along the streets, secure, we thought, and in safety from identification, one after another of the Indians took off his hat and bowed low with the murmur of a prayer. . . .

All that day and the next morning the churches were filled with worshipers, and we could not refrain from remembering that Pátzcuaro was the starting place

of that proto-martyr of the Jesuits in Mexico, Father Gonzalo de Tapia, whose life has been so vividly written by Father W. Eugene Shiels, S.J., and who died at the hands of pagan Indians up north of there in 1594.<sup>1</sup> The Martyrdom of Mexico did not begin in 1910 with Madero or even in 1915 with Carranza; it began in 1520 when the Franciscan and Dominican friars, the Augustinian monks, and later the Jesuits, started out alone, a century before their brethren in Canada and New York State, to Christianize and civilize the Red Indian in Mexico. The dark forces that had possessed the land for untold centuries demanded the blood of the invader in return for giving up the blood of Aztec children which they had drunk so freely. The new blood was poured out generously; and present-day Catholic Mexico has never forgotten it, make no mistake about it.

Two more pictures are in my mind.

One of them is from the Church of San Felipe of Jesus in Mexico City. The name of San Felipe himself stirs the blood. He was a Mexican, a Franciscan missionary in the Philippines, and he was martyred in Japan in 1597. He is the first, and only, native-born North American to have received the honors of canonization. South America, with St. Rose of Lima, St. Toribio—but that is another story. San Felipe is the secondary patron of the American diocese of Baltimore, and that is a story, not forgotten in Maryland's metropolis in 1936.

In San Felipe's Church in Mexico City, then, I stood one night for a fraction of a nocturnal adoration. It was just this parish's turn to take this night in a nationwide series of such ceremonies that succeed one another all through the year. The church was crowded—only with men, men in sandals over their bare feet and a serape around their cotton-clad shoulders, men in evening dress fresh from a dinner party on the Paseo de la Reforma. The church was crowded to suffocation and I had to be rude to push myself in. Archbishop Diaz, one of Mexico's great orators, was in the pulpit. He, and they, would be there all night, this two thousand of Mexico City's male citizens who hide their religious devotion from the casual tourist from the North. It would be sermon, hymn, reading, meditation, and the series all over again, till five o'clock in the morning, when the whole crowded congregation of men would assist, long after myself and the city were asleep, at Mass and Holy Communion.

Another picture I myself assisted at, in a church which shall be nameless, for reasons which will be apparent. It was one of the Masses of a special day of observance which I was asked, or rather ordered, to say, in spite of the fact that Government regulations were slightly at variance with the performance. After all, the worst they could do would be to send me back home. . . .

So I said the Mass. The church was jammed. At seven o'clock, the time for



my Mass, the priest who had said the six o'clock Mass was still at the altar rail, distributing Communion. I was instructed to take his place at the rail and to start Mass at my convenience, when someone would relieve me; then when I had finished Mass, to relieve him, until I was myself relieved by the priest who would say the "eight o'clock." Well, it took me perhaps twenty-five minutes to say Mass, and all the rest of the time I was giving Communion, and to as many men as women, easily.

When, exhausted, I finally came to rest in the sacristy, I asked the sacristan, "How long does this go on?"

"Masses at five, six, seven, eight, nine, and ten," he said succinctly, "and Communion at all of them."

So that is Mexico—or at least some parts of it. It is the perfect testing ground for the modern dilemma.

## CHAPTER II

### CHALLENGE

IN THE MONTH of February, 1927, General Plutarco Elias Calles, then President of Mexico, suddenly created another of the many crises that have invaded the life of Catholics in Mexico. By a decree-law, in virtue of a congressional resolution giving the Executive power to legislate during the recess of Congress, he ordered all priests throughout all the States to leave their posts and report immediately in Mexico City.

I do not know of a single priest who obeyed this law. But the result of this disobedience was that every priest became by that very fact an outlaw, subject to arrest—or worse.

What led to this impasse? To understand that, it is necessary to go back a bit.

General Calles had succeeded General Obregon as President on December 1, 1924, after an election following an armed revolt, December, 1923-April, 1924. This was engineered by Adolfo de la Huerta, one of a triumvirate along with Calles and Obregon, who had agreed to divide up the Presidency among one another. De la Huerta claimed that he was Number 2 in line, but the two others outvoted him. So he took to the field, and was soundly beaten. The election followed as a matter of course. He was lucky to flee the country, and made his way to Los Angeles, where he passed the time before his recent return to Mexico City as a teacher of voice culture for aspirants for honor and money in the studios of Hollywood. His most famous pupil, so far as I know, was a son of Enrico Caruso, but he appears in the news once in a while in a way to show that the virus of the Presidential microbe is still in his veins. So, too, undoubtedly,

does a Russian émigré driving a taxicab in Paris dream of Tsarkoë Selo. . . .

When Calles became President, great things were expected of him. He was known to be a powerful character, he had been a successful commander in the field, and Americans who had met him were unanimous in saying that "he knew what he wanted"—quite a compliment for a Mexican Revolutionary.

He had great plans. He meant to make the Constitution of 1917 mean what it said. Obregon, during his four years as President, had not got very far in this direction. He seems to have governed on the wise principle that you get what you can without rousing too much trouble, and you wait for a good opportunity to get the rest. He let the religious restrictions of the Constitution pretty much alone, looking on them apparently as a poised club to keep the Church from going too far, but not as a scimitar to sever its head. Of course, when Carranza, his chief in the Revolution, had shown signs of wanting to abolish the restricting clauses Obregon had served notice on him; and that grizzled veteran, recognizing the signs, had fled the Capital and met an ignominious death one dark night in March, 1920, at Tlaxcalantongo, in a hut down the slope that would have led to Vera Cruz—and comfort in Paris for his old age, had he managed to make it.

Obregon waited a decent interval, and then mounted the throne. His principal difficulty had been to get recognition from the United States, a thing which was, of course, essential, but his plenipotentiaries managed that all right in negotiation with John Barton Payne, who became head of the Red Cross, and Charles Beecher Warren, who met a rebuff later from the Senate when President Coolidge wanted to make him his Attorney General. They recognized him in the Bucareli pact, and got him a loan in the bargain. When de la Huerta made trouble at the end of his time, he found the United States still propitious, for we gave him a credit good for \$10,000,000 worth of arms, which came in very handy. When he retired to private life, he had a law passed giving him a legal monopoly of the garbanzo bean—"eaten wherever Spanish is spoken"—and then proceeded to monopolize it, with the help of a \$5,000,000 loan from the Grace Bank in New York. How he died, in his turn, will be told in its proper place.

Calles made a good foil to him. Calles was impatient. He wanted to see all the Constitution enforced, regardless of what it cost him or anybody else. He proceeded to do that, and was quickly embroiled with the very United States which had been so friendly to his predecessor. His troubles with oil are recent history, and no part of this story.

His troubles with the Church began in January, 1925. There is no such thing as a Government secret in Mexico, so it quickly got about that Calles was preparing a lengthy decree-law on the Church under the powers obligingly

granted him by the recessing Congress. An old interview with the Archbishop of Mexico City, the aged Msgr. Mora y del Rio, was quoted by *Excelsior* as if it were new, in which he was made to say that the Church would resist any attempt to put into effect the anti-Church clauses of the Constitution. This unfortunate event infuriated Calles, and he seems to have sworn a vow to what gods he had that he would not be thwarted.

It has been a matter of much dispute about who started this row in the first place. The Archbishop has been accused of beginning it, of flinging a vain defi at the President before the President even thought of doing anything himself. There is not much foundation for this. Mora was a gentle and wise old man, and they have in Spanish also a proverb about sleeping dogs. On the contrary, he told me himself in May, 1927, in San Antonio, after he had been arrested and flung into exile, that he took no step until he was physically certain that Calles was already decided and had started writing the law. In fact, a few days before the interview appeared, Calles had made a speech outlining his intentions.

In due course, the law was written and promulgated, to go into effect, in dramatic Mexican fashion, on July 31, the Feast of the Founder of the Jesuits, St. Ignatius Loyola.

The Church was at a standstill. There were thousands in Mexico who believed it was better thus than to go along even under the crippling threats of an Obregon. By the Constitution of 1917 the Church had been deprived of any standing as a body before the law; it had been forbidden to conduct private schools, or hold any private property, and the property it already owned was declared possession of the State, which would decide when and how the Church would use it for religious purposes. No religious publication was allowed to comment unfavorably on any act of the Government when it bore on the affairs of the Church. Foreign missionaries were not allowed to come into the country to evangelize; those who were in were ordered to depart; and it was forbidden to bring up a generation of native clergy in seminaries, which were outlawed. Thus provision was made that ultimately the Church would die out for lack of ministers and for lack of Christian education of children, and meanwhile the States were empowered to decide in their own legislatures how many priests there should be in each one for the needs of the people. The clerical ministry was declared to be a public profession like medicine and the law, and priests, like doctors and lawyers, received their license to practise from the State. If they had no license, they could not practise.

It was this last provision, which, when put into effect by Calles, along with the others, under severe penalties in his enabling law, precipitated the explosion. To the Church in Mexico, this was not separation of Church and State; it was the

closest kind of union. It was to make the Church a department of state, and to demand that it receive its mission to evangelize from the Government. It was, in other words, to make the Church in Mexico cease to be a part of the Catholic Church, and become a Mexican State Church. It is curious to note in passing that all the great revolutions begin this way. The first of them, the French Revolution, had its constitutional oath for the clergy, and the latest, in Russia, set up its Living Church. It is as if there were some kind of secret handbook for revolutionary church policy, and as if all of them follow it blindly—and always with the same result. The fact that the foreign, mostly American Protestant, missions in Mexico accepted the new laws can be explained only on the supposition that the Government did not enforce the laws against their work, though of course most Protestant churches have a European history of State subordination, and on their part their action was not always inconsistent.<sup>1</sup>

Now when Archbishop Caruana, who was Apostolic Delegate in Mexico, was still there, he had foreseen the gathering storm, and recommended the formation of an Episcopal Committee, which should be presided over by the Archbishop, and should consist of any and all Bishops who should find themselves in the city at the time. Before long this proved to be about all the Bishops in the country. To the post of secretary of the Committee was appointed Bishop Pascual Diaz, a Jesuit, and Bishop of Tabasco, who, because of the laws of that fervent State requiring all clergymen to marry, was an enforced resident of Mexico City.

This Committee met to decide how to face the crisis. Their decision was that from July 31 all churches would cease to function until the laws were revised or annulled. This cessation has been variously called an "interdict," a "church strike," or whatever the speaker's prejudices impel him to call it. As a matter of fact, it was none of these things; it was, in the opinion of Bishops in Mexico and Pope in Rome, a mere necessity. The laws were to these an obvious attempt to create an independent Church in Mexico, subject to the State, and cut off from the catholicity and unity of the Universal Church. To obey them was to accept this situation, and secede from the Catholic Church, and it is highly probable that Calles or his advisers knew enough about Catholic doctrine to foresee the outcome. In any case, that was the decision, and it was a fateful one.

Meanwhile the Catholic laymen of Mexico had been meeting also—the *Asociación Cristiana de Jovenes Mexicanos* (A. C. J. M.), the Catholic youth organization, the *Padres de Familias*, the *Damas Católicas*, the Knights of Columbus. A Catholic group, the *Liga Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa*, also made a fateful decision. It voted for a *boicott*, a buyers' strike, for Catholics to deny themselves any luxury that was sold by anybody who was friendly to the

Government.

The young men and ladies particularly threw themselves into the movement with great joy and enthusiasm, with that peculiar humor of which only Mexicans seem to be capable, and that only when things are going worst for them. I have taken part in dozens of conversations with Mexicans whose future was as dark as anything could be, and I do not remember one which did not end with some boisterous joke, the point of which was their own particular personal plight.

I cannot recall all the delightful things that were done in the first flush of the protest, before it turned to the dark and bloody business it later became. Two young friends of mine, one an army officer, the other an architect, set up a perambulating radio broadcasting station, and from that, placed each night in a different house, broadcast speeches rallying the Catholics and attacking the Government with the greatest of heartiness. The Government became much disturbed, and in the course of time my army friend was called in as a radio expert by his superior and commanded to use a direction finder in order to locate the offending station. He saluted, and made haste to perfect arrangements for the evening's broadcast. One day, after about a month of this, the Government's agents finally caught up with the audacious broadcasters, who got out over the roof as the soldiers were entering the front door. The officer went back quietly to his quarters; and the young architect was met with an automobile at the outskirts of the city by his sister, who had considerably packed a bag for him, with "an extra suit of clothes." When after a long train ride, he searched the bag for the extra suit, he found that it was black trousers and a tuxedo! He had small use for them during the long years of his exile in the United States.

On another occasion the city saw its skies blackened by a cloud of toy balloons, which the young people had let off at a given signal as a protest against the Government. Then the city would suddenly blossom forth in the morning with bright and clever posters giving the Catholic side of the question. There were debates, sudden parades as suddenly dispersed, letters to the papers.

But these small triumphs were to end, and not many weeks were to pass before the young men were out on the hills in armed camps, and their sisters were risking their hands, and sometimes losing them, making ammunition, and then in the dark of the night themselves driving it out to the mountains in huge lorries; unless it happened, as in the case of one young señorita whom I knew, whose parents took alarm and sent her off posthaste to study sculpture under the Ladies of the Sacred Heart in New York. Alas, I fear she found the halls of Manhattanville pretty tame after her wild rides over Mount Ajusco to the rebels' camp. But she is happily married now in Mexico, and bringing up a fine Catholic family in spite of the difficulties.



Not a single Bishop accepted the new Government status decreed for all, and not more than two or three priests, which is a better record than those shown by the French Church under the Revolution there, and by the Orthodox Church in Russia. There was, however, a peculiar incident in the case of "Patriarch" Perez, who formed a new Church, "The Mexican Catholic Apostolic Church," under Government patronage, and was given one of the oldest churches in Mexico City. Perez was a priest, and one or two other priests seceded with him. But it is interesting to note that when the "Patriarch" came to his deathbed, he sent for a Jesuit priest, and died a penitent and consoling death. His schism had already died a natural death some time before.

The Bishops, meanwhile, had not been idle. Already, in July, in a joint Pastoral Letter, they had issued to their people this solemn promise:

"Before God, before civilized humanity, before our country, and before history, we protest against this decree. With the help of God and with your help, Catholic priests and people of Mexico, we will labor to have this decree, together with the anti-religious articles of the Constitution, amended, and we will not stop until we see that accomplished."

It will be perhaps startling to some to recall that in that same Pastoral Letter, they asked explicitly for a true separation of Church and State, as the most practical ground for amicable living in a country where it was admitted there was no longer complete religious agreement.

They did not stop with words, however. Two of them, Archbishop Ruiz of Morelia and Bishop Diaz of Tabasco, sought an appointment with Calles through the good offices of certain moderate Freemasons. A long and at times lively conference ended with this curious ultimatum from the President: "You have only two ways open to you, either go to Congress, or take up arms."

They went to Congress. With a memorial signed by 2,000,000 names of Mexican citizens, an enormous roll which I have seen, they beseeched the Congress to listen to a calm argument for revision of the persecuting articles of the Constitution. It was charged that the petition was not even read; in any case, nothing came of it. In a country where votes are an important consideration, the representatives would probably have been scared out of their wits. But in Mexico, there was the army. . . .

So little by little, all through the rest of that year, in places where churches were forcibly closed even to private devotions; where foreign priests and nuns were hunted out and expelled, like the famous American Mother Sempé and her Visitation Nuns; where too-zealous Catholics were arrested and their property expropriated on various pretexts, the people began to rebel. In the States of Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacan, the young men began to take to the hills

with whatever arms, mostly old and rusty, they could muster. By January, Coahuila, and parts of Chihuahua were aflame; Oaxaca, Colima, Nayarit, and Zacatecas followed. The other alternative of Calles, after the Bishops had chosen and failed at their own, was followed by the laity.

It has been well said that if it had been left to the Bishops, all Mexico knows that there would have been no fighting. They, with one or two exceptions, were incurably pacifist. It was indeed a moment that was full of anguish for them. They knew that overthrowing the Mexican Government involved overthrowing a vastly stronger power, as de la Huerta had discovered in 1923, and as Escobar was to find out in 1929. There was an American embargo on private shipment of arms to Mexico and an open market for the Government. Back in 1868, the revolutionist Juarez was even allowed to steal arms and ammunition from General Sheridan's stores on the border in order to fight the Emperor Maximilian. They knew all that, and what the issue was bound to be. And in this they were not deceived. Dwight Morrow himself told me later, in May, 1928, at his penthouse at Fifth Avenue and Sixty-sixth Street in New York, that the American Government would not consider any solution of the religious question in Mexico that involved a change of regime there.

To this day there exists a deep-seated rancor in the hearts of many Mexican Catholics whom I know because, with one exception, the Bishop of Huejutla, the Hierarchy would not speak the word to go out and fight. The most they would do, and all they ever did, was to tell the people what everyone among them already knew, that they were in full possession of their rights, if all other forms of recourse had been exhausted, and if there was some chance of success, to take up arms in defense of their liberties. Beyond that, in spite of entreaty and threat, the Episcopate as a whole would not go.

So the young men went out to the hills, and the girls stayed behind to collect money for arms, to make ammunition, and to truck it out at night to the camps.

Yet it was not exactly a religious war. It is true that their battle cry was "*Viva Cristo Rey*, Long Live Christ the King!" It is true, too, that their enemies dubbed them in contempt *Cristeros*, just as *Jesuit* and *Christian* were at the beginning terms of derision. Religious liberty, of course, was the first item on their program, but liberty of the press, liberty of association, liberty of public meeting, were necessarily denied in a totalitarian regime where only one political party was tolerated, and no public expression of political difference with that party was permitted. Ballots, it was said, had no value; only bullets would speak.

There were times in 1927-28 when in all of five States the writ of the

Government did not run, and out of them all Government forces had been expelled. In those places, only the airplane was left as an offensive weapon, and that was used somewhat as it was used in Ethiopia and in Northwest India and in Syria. Professional soldiers were the commanders of the "armed defense." I have before me a headquarters report of engagements fought, drawn up in military fashion, from May 22 to May 31 in 1928. It happened to reach me in those days by a grapevine route, and is a sample of two years' fighting. During those ten days fifty engagements, defeats or successes, and involving from 150 to 2,000 men, are reported for widely separated sectors of ten States. Between 1927 and 1929, hosts of members of the Youth Association, all young men of good family and education, lost their lives. We cannot say that they died in vain, though their sacrifice now seems to be a failure.

But my task is not to tell of battles and revolution, though it is a glorious chapter in Mexican history. My story is of what the priests and people suffered who did not fight, for it is a silent epic that has never been written.

## CHAPTER III

### DEFIANCE

SO IN FEBRUARY, 1927, Calles precipitated the climax of his struggle with the Church by ordering all priests to report immediately to Mexico City. The whole priesthood refused in a body, and became outlaws at once. It was obviously outside the power of a Mexican President to give such an order, for it signified an interference with the spiritual functions of the Church which he did not possess by any law.

His excuse was that the priests were leading the rebellion. As a matter of fact, only three priests actually took up arms, contrary to what was widely asserted in the press in the United States at the time, and their names are well known: Fathers Pedroza, Vega and Salinas, and they did so in defiance of orders from their Bishops, who suspended them from their sacerdotal functions. We can perhaps pardon them in the heat of those dreadful times for attempting to make a distinction between their capacity as priests and that of mere citizens, in which they acted. A few others acted as chaplains with the forces in the field.

The rest of the clergy stayed at their posts, more or less. Many of them were on the run most of the time, and when they were caught they were killed or imprisoned. Sometimes the chase got too hot, and those who could slipped across the Rio Grande. The border towns of Laredo, San Antonio, El Paso, and Nogales were filled in those days with priests who had come breathless in the dead of night to salvation in a free land. They settled down as best they might with the charity of the Bishops, particularly Bishop Shuler of El Paso, Archbishop Drossaerts of San Antonio, and Bishop Cantwell of Los Angeles. When they got a chance they slipped back again, dressed as peons, and made

their priestly rounds until the chase got too hot once more.

Calles himself told John Gregory Mason, a correspondent for the London *Daily Telegraph*, in January, 1928, that he had had about fifty priests shot for being rebels to the Government. As a matter of fact, the names of 100 priests are known as having fallen before the firing squad.

There was, for instance, Father Elias Nieves, an Augustinian, whose story I take from the *Bolletino Historico Agustiniano* for June, 1928. He was a vigorous young man of forty, and when the order of February came he stuck to his post as parish priest in the Canada of Casachas, in Michoacan, but of course he moved out of the rectory to the hut of a native.

On March 8 a company of soldiers arrived and asked for the priest. His house was locked and silent. They began to break down the door. The news spread like wildfire in the vicinity and in no time a crowd of peons had made a solid phalanx around the church, for fear it, too, would be destroyed. "Where was the priest?" Nobody knew. He had slipped away to a neighboring village; but someone tipped off the soldiers. There they went, but no sign of him. Finally, a poor peasant woman, under instant threat of torture, pointed a trembling finger at a house, and Father Nieves was dragged forth. Two sturdy peons made a hopeless effort to protect him, and they, too, were taken along.

That evening, the three captives lay bound in the house of a wealthier Catholic, who offered 10,000 pesos to the Captain for their lives. This had often worked before, and indeed was frequently the sole reason for the priest hunt by local *capitanes*. But this one was sea-green incorruptible, and the Father must face the firing squad in the morning. The Captain, however, offered the two peons their liberty, even urged it upon them. They stolidly refused to leave their pastor, and the Captain shrugged his shoulders. Only two more lives. . . .

Father Nieves and the others were called early, and the troops kept the villagers cowed. The two peons knelt down for Confession and absolution, and they stepped forward together. "We are ready," they announced. One after the other they took the hail of bullets without flinching.

It was the priest's turn. As he walked to the wall beside the two motionless bodies, he turned and asked for a few moments to recollect himself. He knelt a long while, and then standing, said: "I am ready." But at the moment that the soldiers lifted their rifles, he raised his hand.

"Kneel down," he said, "I will give you the blessing of a priest—and along with it my pardon for what you are about to do."

Every one of the simple soldiers knelt down and piously received the blessing of the priest, making the Sign of the Cross on their bodies.

The Captain laughed.

"Even for you there is a blessing and my pardon," said Father Nieves. For answer the Captain drew his revolver and shot him dead. Then, to make sure, he stepped forward, and gave him the *coup de grace* in the temple, blowing the brains out.

His funeral next day was a triumph for the countryside, and his body was laid beside those of his two faithful companions.

Then there were the two Franciscans, Father Juniper and Brother Humble. (Believe it or not, those were their names!) The Bishop of Tacámbaro told me their story at the time.

When the troubles came, Father Juniper thought it better to work out in the alfalfa fields, the better to hide himself and so carry on his ministrations as a priest. Brother Humble worked beside him, for the Father was over seventy.

Alas, a traitor gave word of the inoffensive couple. A gentleman wealthy enough to own an automobile gathered them up and hurried them off to a nearby town, but they were met there by a squad of soldiers who had been warned, and they immediately rushed them off to Zamora to the headquarters of General Fox.

"How many Masses have you said?" asked the General.

Father Juniper, who must have meditated long on his patron in the Little Flowers of St. Francis, replied ingenuously:

"General, you can count it up. I have been ordained forty-five years. In truth, I have said very many."

"I did not ask you that," growled the angry General. "I asked you how many Masses you had said since it was forbidden to say Mass."

"In truth, sir," answered Father Juniper, "I have said as many as I could."

So he had to face the firing squad. He was put on a military train for Yurécuaro, to have it done there. But the train had to return immediately, and as it neared Zamora, the officer in charge ordered the train stopped, and made Father Juniper get down. As he stood by the roadbed, they shot at him from the train. But, lo and behold, though his body was riddled with bullets, he still stood upright! He was literally dead on his feet. One of the soldiers had to get down and push him over.

But when Brother Humble saw what they had done, he began to cry. He stood on the train platform, and wept—not for himself, surely, but for the good old man he had tended so faithfully. So one of the soldiers put a rifle to the back of his head, shot it off, and kicked him away.

When you go by that way, if you know where to look, you will see by the roadbed a beautiful monument which the people erected at the spot where Father Juniper met his death. I passed it some two years later, and saluted it from the



train platform with a prayer, not forgetting Brother Humble.

Sometimes the soldiers mistreated their victims after they were dead. In Silao, a village near Salamanca in Guanajuato, where the people now come to the station and offer you bright woolen goods, pottery, and gloves for sale, the peasants rose up in arms after Government troops had destroyed the famous statue of Christ the King at El Cubilete, for consecrating which the Apostolic Delegate, Msgr. Filippi, had been deported by President Obregon.

After the skirmish, the Government troops came to Baltierilla, where the parish priest, Father Jesus Mendez, had remained quietly but openly in his rectory, and dragged him to a wall and shot him. Then they tied his body to the tail of their lorry and dragged it for miles along the dusty country roads.

Not all the priests who were captured were put to death. The *sotanos* of Mexico City were filled with priests and nuns, hundreds of them; and some were tortured and died, and some "disappeared." For months the Bishop of Aguascalientes, Msgr. Valdespino, was in prison, and merely being there must have been a torture, for he was a man of nearly 300 pounds. He was expelled from the country in 1927, and he died soon after, as anyone who saw him as I did in El Paso might have foretold.

Sometimes the jailers made a good thing out of it, as friends of the prisoners were always ready to pay a lot for a little consideration for their relatives and friends. Indeed, General Roberto Cruz, Chief of Police in Mexico City, the executioner of Father Pro, made quite a good thing out of it. From inquiries among Catholics in Mexico City it was calculated that he levied a sum of 25,000 pesos a month from families whom he permitted to harbor a priest and have Mass. But of that side of it, more later. Out of his proceeds Cruz built him a fine if somewhat fantastic palace in Mexico City, which you can still admire. Alas, he did not long enjoy it, for he fell out of the good graces of the dictator, Calles, revolted with Escobar and, defeated, fled to the United States. A friend of mine not long ago passing through Nogales into Mexico, saw him in poor clothes leaning against a post in the railroad station, a common lounge. Later, by a turn of fate, he was recalled to Mexico by President Cárdenas.

But the murders of priests were common enough. As early as August, 1926, Father Luis Batiz, parish priest of Chalchihuites, in Durango, was shot along with three youths of the A. J. C. M. His people tried to save him, but he forbade them. His tomb is now a place of pilgrimage.

In a village of Jalisco, in 1927, Father Francisco Vera was surprised while saying Mass, and was shot while wearing his liturgical vestments; the captain who shot him took his picture before the killing, and sent it to Calles, to show his zeal. Calles gave it to the papers. In another village of Jalisco, an assistant parish

priest, Father Sabas Reyes, was tortured for three days because he would not tell the whereabouts of his pastor, and then shot. And so the story went, for more than a hundred. It was a story that never was carried in the newspapers of the world, even those which make a practice of publishing sensational news.

About this time, there was in Mexico City an American writer who had heard all the tales of reprisals being practised on the population. He had written well and often in favor of the Revolution, and he refused to believe the unbelievable, as he thought of it. So a group of his cronies took up a collection, as the story was told to me, and dared him to go out and see. His name was Carleton Beals.

He went, and what he saw is contained in the eighteenth chapter of his book, "Mexican Maze." He cannot be said to understand the issues underlying the Church-State struggle, but he should be praised for his courage in telling the unpopular story of what he actually saw and heard at first hand.

One of his first shocks was to have the local Government authorities in Guadalajara boast to him that forty old men and women who had been caught going to Mass had been rounded up and shot at night in the cemetery. And his next shock was to find out that the wife of an important Government official had Mass said in their own house and was untroubled, while poor be-shawled women hurrying through the streets to Mass on early mornings were followed, and the destination marked, to be raided by a squad of soldiers.

"It became good sport," he says, "to arrest Catholics on suspicion, holding them in jail without preferring charges until they paid thousands of pesos for release and promised to keep their mouths shut." Then, he found that the process was extended to an edict confiscating the property of Catholics as rebels, "and their properties found their way into the hands of official favorites." Of the murder of the prominent lawyer, Anacleto González Flores, an outstanding Catholic, of whom more later, he found that "the Government never presented documentary evidence that he was directly connected with the rebel bands operating in the State."

But what most impressed him was the concentration order of General Ferreira, who forced the evacuation of an area in Jalisco of 800,000 square miles, with 50,000 settled inhabitants. All were ordered to leave, and come into five designated places—"with the crops of wheat, barley, and fruits ready to harvest, estimated in worth at 40,000,000 pesos." The idea was to pacify the region by desolation; and the order was largely obeyed, for every acre of it was to be bombed from the air if it was not. Owners of large haciendas even had to leave with all their belongings, for these would have disappeared, and they were told that not even a caretaker was permitted, even a peon left would be shot. "An

Acadia migration," cries Mr. Beals, "that has left bitter memories and hateful scars!"

Bitter and hateful—yes; and no wonder. I have visited families in Guadalajara who had lost all for the privilege of attending Mass, or because one of the sons was out in the hills, avenging the wrongs of his people. Mr. Beals does not understand "how Christ the King, the Prince of Peace, was served by the slaughter of innocent men, women, and children." Possibly, if he had been a Guadalaran, and had actually undergone what he saw, he might have understood that death was preferable to slavery, and slavery with only the ignoble result of seeing one's wealth transferred to "Generals" who had not long before been servants in your father's hacienda.

Yet he does not hesitate to say: "For this desolation and exodus the militarists and irresponsible bandits, not the Catholics, were responsible. Jalisco, the richest agricultural State in the Union, was swept by a plague of rebels and militarists, the country stripped as by a plague of locusts." And the result? "The new arrangements in Los Altos became, in part, a colossal steal, in which all the wealthy hacendados, in addition to maintaining the 'Red Guard of Jalisco'—not quite amiably, were forced to grease the palms of generals and politicians in order to buy exemption and be allowed to harvest their crops."

But it was not only the hacendados in the country who suffered. One of the great young Catholic leaders in Guadalajara was Anacleto Gonzalez Flores. A lawyer, he was an organizer of Catholic Action as well. He was President of the A. C. J. M., the youth organization, in his State, and he was the founder of the Union Popular. Tranquilly he went his way, practising his profession as best he might, and meeting when he could with Catholics to urge them to stand fast in their Faith, tempted as they were without the sacramental life of the Church, and in the midst of such grievous inducements to save their lives and properties by joining the side of the Government.

One night he was visiting the house of his two cousins, Ramon and Jorge Vargas González, when the police broke into it and arrested all three. Taken to the police station they were questioned on the whereabouts of the Archbishop of Guadalajara, Msgr. Orozco y Jimenez, who was then in hiding, sometimes in the hills, sometimes in the city itself. They refused to say a word. They were tortured, and still they were silent.

So they were lined up against a wall, on April 1, 1927, and shot. "I die, but God does not die!" were Anacleto's last words, like Garcia Moreno. The heroic young widow carefully explained to her young son all that happened, so that he would never forget it, and had his picture taken beside his father's body. Neither has Guadalajara forgotten him, for he stands to the city as a kind of shining

knight, so much of tenderness and grandeur is there still to his memory in that old city, the second largest in Mexico.

For there is a kind of stubbornness in the Guadalajarans that nobody has ever been able to conquer. One satrap of the Government took it into his head to change the names of streets which held Saints' names, a whole martyrology full, into Avenue I, II, III, etc., and 1st, 2nd, 3rd Streets. But the population would have none of it. The Saints remained, as far as they were concerned. The post office refused to deliver letters to the old Saints, only to the new numbers. They wrote no letters. So when one morning many of the shiny new signs were missing, leaving the Saints still there in stone built into the walls goodness knows when, the officials were only too glad to let well enough alone. In happier days I expect to see the name of Anacleto Flores decorating the principal street in the city.

I need offer no judgment of my own on all this. It has been judged by men whom no one can suspect of bias for the Church. Ernest Gruening, whose judgments are on the whole unfavorable to the Church, investigated the rebellion and the reprisals and concluded thus:

"It was the Mexican military who would not let it die. They profiteered and patrioteered on its continuance. They accepted the opportunity with a whoop. Under it anyone could be denounced—and robbed. In conservative Jalisco, where greater sympathy with the rebels did not necessarily imply overt aid, merchants, hacendados, and rancheros of known Catholic affiliations were systematically arrested and their property confiscated.

"Or while they were struggling to clear themselves their crops would be taken. If a man so abused escaped with his life, burning with indignation he fled to the hills. He might have been a neutral or passive sympathizer; he became an active rebel, with the passionate intransigence of a wronged man."<sup>1</sup>

In page after page Dr. Gruening lists the cases of men to whom this happened, and of some who lost their lives: the ones in Guadalajara; Alfonso Arce, whose relatives were assured by officers his life was not in danger, but was shot thirty-six hours later, leaving a widow and three small children; José Santibañez in Guanajuato under General José Amarillas, and of others killed by soldiers shooting at them as they rode in a carriage; and so on. The *Ley Fuga*, of course, played a prominent part in the doings: the pretext that the victim was killed "trying to escape." And Dr. Gruening discovered a new one, the *Ley de suicidio*, which was an invention of General Roberto Cruz: the prisoner was found in the prison in the morning with a bullet hole in his head, and a revolver by his side. The public was asked to believe that he had not been searched after his arrest for the concealed weapon.

Thus the honor roll of Mexico lengthened out. At least two children are known to have suffered death: Tomas de la Mora, sixteen years old, who himself fitted the noose around his neck, for he would not let the soldiers touch him; Pepito Sanchez del Rio, only thirteen, who walked carefully over to the grave that had been dug for him, so that he might not have to be carried to it after the firing squad had done its work.

## CHAPTER IV

### FATHER PRO

MANY PRIESTS lost their lives under the reprisals for the anti-Calles rebellion during 1927-1929, but unfortunately most of them died in obscurity and we will never know the details of their going. They remain mere speechless witnesses of the refusal of the Mexican priesthood to obey a governmental order to abandon their sacerdotal duties.

But there is one victim of a firing squad, who for one reason or another, quickly became a world-wide figure. One of the reasons is that the Government took photographs of his execution and gave them to the news agencies, which spread them all over the world.

This act of Calles was a serious miscalculation. It was his aim to show the world how priests were rebelling against the Government, and how that Government was putting down rebellion. The result was that the Christian world accepted the Jesuit Father Miguel Pro Juarez as a martyr, and everybody else, on the testimony of men like Ernest Gruening and Carleton Beals, whose witness in the matter is certainly impartial, merely looked on the executions as another example of Mexican barbarity.

Due to the revolutionary disturbances during Father Pro's youth, most of his education had been abroad. He returned, a priest, to Mexico just at the end of the fateful July of 1926 which saw the beginning of the troubles. His first priestly task was to assist in hearing the confessions of the thousands who flocked to the churches on the eve of their closing. He tells us in one of his letters that he was in the confessional from half-past five in the morning to eleven, and again from three to eight in the evening. Twice, he says, he was removed in a fainting



condition, because he had been ill during the last months of his stay abroad.

But once the churches were closed, a new kind of existence began. His letters are full of the amusing and exciting scenes through which he passed. Here is an account of his new duties, typical of those of all the other priests.

"As soon as services in the churches were suspended, I organized what were called 'Communion Stations.' They were various places where I went to give Communion. In this way, I daily distributed some three hundred Communions. On the first Fridays there was a considerable increase; the last First Friday I distributed 1,200 Communions. I have fixed days for hearing confessions, and various houses designated whither people of all classes come to consult me, to receive advice, or listen to an exhortation.

"How do I bear up under so much work, being so weak and having just left the hospital? . . . This proves conclusively that if Divine Providence, which makes use of me as an instrument, did not have a hand in the work, I would have failed entirely. . . . *Unde non ego sed gratia Dei mecum.*"

Sometimes the work grew dangerous, and the police had to be outwitted, but Father Pro was always equal to the occasion:

"In spite of the strict watch on the part of the secret police, which has in this city more than 10,000 agents, I am able to baptize, preside at marriages, and bring Viaticum to the dying. Twice the police have arrived at the place whither I was going to exercise my ministry. Once, it was at half-past six in the morning, in one of the Communion Stations. I was right in the midst of the Communions, when a servant girl came crying, 'The police!' Everybody became pale with terror. 'Be quiet,' I said, 'hide your veils and scatter through the rooms, and don't make any noise.' Disguised as I was in a gray suit, and carrying the Blessed Sacrament on my breast, I went to receive the intruders.

" 'There is public worship here,' they said to me.

" 'No, there is not,' I replied.

" 'But there is, Sir, there is public worship here.'

" 'Well, then, they have deceived you, gentlemen.'

" 'I saw a priest enter. . . .'

" 'We have orders to search the house. Follow us.'

" 'Well, I like that! I follow you? At whose order? Let me see my name. Go through the house, and when you find public worship, come and tell me, so that I may hear Mass.'

"They began to run through the house, and, to prevent greater misfortune, I accompanied them, telling them what was behind each closed door. But, as it was the first time that I had gone through the interior of the house, what I declared to be a sleeping apartment turned out to be a study. They found no

priest, and the clever police took up their guard at the entrance to the house. I took leave of them, telling them that if I did not have something else to do, I should remain with them until they seized the bold priest who so made sport of the extraordinary vigilance of such keen-sighted policemen. I then finished the distribution of Communion, and when I returned that way, the priest had not yet appeared."

Once in a while even his boldness was too much for those whom he visited to give Communion to them, and he had to give up his errand as fruitless, not, however, without having had a little private fun at the expense of the honest police.

"On another occasion, on going to say Mass in one of the suburbs, I suddenly ran into two policemen who were guarding the house where I was going to celebrate.

" 'This time we're lost,' I said to myself. To go in would be to expose oneself; to go back would be fear; to abandon the people who were within would be disgrace. With the greatest coolness possible, I stopped in front of the policemen, noted down the number of the house, unbuttoned my coat as though to show them something, and said: 'There is a cat inside there!' They gave me a military salute, and allowed me to pass. They thought that I was on the reserve force, and that I had shown them a badge which the reserves are accustomed to wear under their coats. 'Now there is a cat inside,' I said, as I raced up the stairs. Mass was impossible. And the people on seeing me come in grew pale and wanted to lock me up behind a wardrobe. 'We are safer now,' I told them, 'seeing that we have the police guarding our house.' But it was no use. They wanted me to go out over the roof. I took my cassock and went out where I came in, and received two superb military salutes from the policemen."

Of course, he had to wear many disguises, as did all the other priests who were doing the same dangerous work that he was doing:

"My appearance as a student quiets many suspicions about my profession. Sometimes with a cane in my hand, at others with a police dog which had been given me, following at my heels, at others riding my brother's bicycle (which has already given me a bruise on the left arm and a bump on the forehead), I go about everywhere day and night, doing good. . . .

"I have been appointed head of the Board of Conferences, and my duty consists in preparing those who have to go to speak to the crowds. Many young men of the Capital come to us, young men of talent and promise, to settle their difficulties in philosophy, morals, sociology, and politics.

"I have heard confessions even in the jails, and here I spend most of my time, for they are filled with Catholics. I bring them meals, pillows, blankets,

money, cigars, or all these together. If the jailers only knew what sort of bird I am! How I wish they knew, so that I could be their prisoner, if only for two weeks! Twenty days ago an order was given for my arrest. But it has not yet been carried out, and that in spite of the fact that I am not in hiding, and do what I have to do in broad daylight, and electric light, since the sun does not always serve my convenience.

"I have given many retreats. One of them I gave disguised as a mechanic to some twenty chauffeurs. We held it in a large yard. Another retreat was for some eighty women teachers, of the Government, women without any fear of God or man. They denied the existence of Hell and the immortality of the soul. The retreat ended with twelve notable conversions; and all the women who made the retreat received Communion.

"One day I went to attend a sick woman. She was a theosophist of the first order, and let loose a torrent of curses and blasphemies against what we hold most holy and sacred. A mouth truly hellish—but in six days she has completely changed. Very likely she will die tomorrow as the result of an operation, but I will bring her Holy Communion early."

So the year 1926 wore on, and as 1927 grew near, with the rebels already forming out in the hills, the fun grew more exciting, as the reprisals began.

"On the fourth of December, the day on which six hundred balloons were released to distribute thousands of leaflets for the defense of religion, I was taken prisoner together with other young men. They conducted us to jail that evening at seven o'clock, marching us off between two files of soldiers. We passed the night in the courtyard, under the open sky, for in the prison-order was the instruction: 'Let the prisoners feel no comfort.' During the night we said the beads, and sang all the pious songs we could think of. The following day we were set free. Now that I think of it, I wonder that they did not shoot me. Before going out, they asked me: 'Are you ready to pay such a sum as a fine? Mr. Calles is very much put out about that matter of the balloons.' 'No, sir,' I answered, 'and for two reasons; first, because I haven't a cent; and secondly, even if I had, I would not want to keep for the rest of my life the remorse of having contributed even a penny from my pocket to the support of the present Government.'

"The Catholics have taken the defensive against Calles, and the reprisals are going to be terrible, above all in the city of Mexico. The first to suffer will be those who have put their fingers into the religious question, and I have put mine there up to the elbow. Oh, would that it were my lot to be among the first,—or the last,—anywhere, to be one of the number. And if I am, get your prayers ready for Heaven."

He seems to have a premonition that this was not going to last. The

shadows were closing in, and the thoughts grew more serious. The "winning number" was already whirling in the lottery drum.

"I had a very droll experience which could have ended tragically, the first night of a retreat. On leaving the house at half-past nine, I caught sight of two fellows who crossed the street and waited for me at the corner. 'My boy,' I said, 'good-bye to your life.' But relying on the proverb that he who strikes first strikes twice, I turned towards them and asked them for a match. 'You can get one in the store,' was the answer. I moved off, but they followed me. 'Perhaps it was only a coincidence,' I thought. I turned this way, and that: they did the same. 'This time you're a goner,' I said to myself. I took an auto; they did the same. Fortunately, the driver was a Catholic, and seeing me in such a fix, he put himself at my service. 'Look, my lad, at the corner that I point out to you, slow up a bit, I'll jump out, and you go right on.'

"I put my cap into my pocket and . . . jumped. I got up at once and leaned against a tree, but in such a way *that I might be seen* by them. They passed me a second later, almost grazing me with the mud-guards of their car. They saw me, but it did not in the least occur to them that it was I. I turned to go, but not as nimbly as I could have wished, for the fall I got had left me numbed. 'Steady, my boy; now we're ready for another.' And with a limp I took the road home.

"Yes, I sigh for the quiet of our houses, for the ease with which our ordinary duties are done. . . . But here, in the midst of the whirlwind, I wonder at the special care of God, the very special graces which He gives us—His presence most intimately felt when discouragement comes to make us feel our littleness, and I feel the truth of that sublime answer: 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for virtue is made strong in infirmity.'

"The great power of our enemies who rely on money, weapons, and lies is going to fall very soon, like the statue which Daniel saw overturned by the pebble which fell from heaven. Already the splendor of the Resurrection is felt because the blackness of the Passion is almost at its thickest. From all sides we receive news of attacks and reprisals; the victims are many; the number of martyrs grows every day. Oh, if only I should draw a winning number."

His time was not far away. While General Obregon was riding through the woods of Chapultepec in his automobile, another car drew near and out of it a bomb was thrown at him. It did little harm, only scratching the enamel. Obregon's guards fired, but all the occupants of the bomb car escaped, except the driver, a certain Nahum Lamberto Ruiz, who slumped behind the wheel with a bullet through his eye. Nobody else was taken, except a young Indian, Juan Tirado, who fled in panic with other passersby, and was captured by the police.

On the night of November 18, Father Pro was quietly sleeping in his

parents' house, in the same room with his younger brothers, Humberto and Roberto. The police broke in, and all were arrested. Humberto insisted on going to confession before they started out, and Father Pro resisted the police until this was done. Then he said to his two brothers:

"From this moment let us offer our lives to God for the Church in Mexico, and let us do it, all three, in such a way that God may accept the sacrifice."

Once in prison—but let the youngest, Roberto, tell the story, as he wrote it down for me not long afterward:

"In prison we were first all in the same cell. Once alone we began to consider what we should say to the judges, but immediately Miguel said: 'No; we will not arrange that; God said that when we met our judges we were not to hesitate to answer, for the Holy Ghost would aid us.' And so it was agreed. We recommended ourselves anew to God, and then forgetting the seriousness of our plight, we began to sing happily, to joke, and to converse just as we would have done at any other time.

"Later we were each examined separately and then held incommunicado, though I was locked up near my brother Miguel. We remained serene and did not cease to declare that we had had absolutely nothing to do with the attempted murder. [All three made sworn statements to that effect.]

"During the six days that we were confined, we never left off our feelings of happiness, and talked to each other with loud voices. Miguel said the Rosary, and we answered, as did many others there confined. Father Pro made himself loved by everybody, even his jailers; he shared his food with the soldiers, gave them cigarettes, in fact was like one of them, a companion and a friend. One of his jailers submitted to him his doubts about religion and about being allowed to belong to a forbidden society. Father Pro immediately set about converting the man. He succeeded; after his death the man returned to the Church.

"About an hour before the execution, with a presentiment of what was about to happen, though nothing was said to us, Father Pro turned toward me and said: 'This morning all three of us are going to be shot. Don't worry; rather let us thank God that we have been chosen; let us renew our offering, and let us pardon our enemies.' When the moment came, and the Chief came to call us, he found us joking among ourselves, and jumping up and down to get warm, for the cold was great and inaction had slowed our circulation.

"When he was called, Miguel went out as he had entered, without his sweater, which he had taken off to be more free in his movements. They sent him back for it, and when he returned, I helped him to put it on. As I was fixing it for him, Miguel gave me a little pat on the arm, as if to signify his self-mastery. He sallied forth from the prison without a word of protest or of

violence. . . . What happened after that you already know."

What happened was this. Juan Tirado had been fearfully tortured to make him implicate the others; all he would say was that he knew nothing at all, he had merely happened to be passing by. Blood stains were found on the back seat of the car, and fingerprints taken; but they evidently were not those of the three Pro brothers, nor of Luis Segura Vilchis, a young Catholic engineer prominent in Catholic affairs who had been accused also, for no use was ever made of them. No evidence was ever produced of complicity, but nevertheless all five were condemned to death with no trial.

Meanwhile frantic efforts had been made to save them. An *amparo*, that almost sacred injunction that is always given even in the worst cases, was refused. Prominent citizens called on the authorities, and were rebuffed; they called on the American Ambassador, Dwight Morrow, who told them he could not intervene. Finally, a South American Ambassador went to Calles, and secured a reprieve. Joyfully, he ran to the prison, to hear the news that all were already shot—all but Roberto, and that is how he came to be saved. He was released almost immediately.

Father Pro was the first to die. When he went to the wall in the prison yard, he knelt a moment, and held his eyes on the Crucifix he had received when he took his vows of religion. He pardoned his enemies, and refused to be blindfolded. He held his arms out in the form of a cross, and at the very moment of the command to fire he cried: "*Viva Cristo Rey*, Long Live Christ the King!" and fell riddled with bullets. A sergeant gave him the *coup de grace* in the temple.

Humberto, Vilchis, and Tirado each went in turn, the first two with the same cry, but when Tirado was asked if he wanted anything, weak from torture and incipient pneumonia, he only gasped: "I want my mamma!"

That night there was an extraordinary scene in the Pro house. Miguel lay in state and a Jesuit priest, defying the law in cassock and surplice, led the prayers. On the breast of Father Pro, all through the night, lay a pyx containing the Blessed Sacrament. Roberto had sent word that he wanted to go to Communion, and It lay there waiting for him.

The funeral was an immense outpouring of people, in whom holy joy and human grief were equally mingled. Father Pro is now revered and prayed to as a true martyr wherever Catholics live.

. . . . .

The story had a curious sequel.

Two days after the executions, Dwight Morrow started on his famous trip through the country in the Presidential train with Will Rogers and General Calles. For that, he has been execrated by Catholics in Mexico ever since. His biographer, Harold Nicolson, tells us that the purpose of Calles in arranging the trip was "to demonstrate to the Mexican Catholics that they could look for no assistance from Washington." He then shows from a letter to the American Under-Secretary of State that Mr. Morrow "was acutely aware of the implications underlying the President's hospitality," but he argued that by putting Calles under obligation to him he would be the better able later to induce him to follow along with his own designs, which included, at the instance of Cardinal Hayes and Morgan O'Brien, an alleviation of the burden of the Catholics. Mr. Nicolson tells us that "the decision was one of the most difficult he was ever called on to make." In the light of later events, to be told here, one may be allowed to differ with Mr. Nicolson, however, in his conclusion that "by thus allowing himself to be momentarily represented as condoning the execution of Father Pro Juarez, Morrow established relations with Calles which, even from the extreme Catholic point of view, were more than justified by results."<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER V

### HIDDEN SHEPHERDS

A SECRET that was kept for two years by 15,000 people is unusual in this or any other age. It is one of the yet untold marvels of the persecution of Catholics in Mexico. When Archbishop Francisco Orozco y Jimenez decided on a fateful Friday evening in October, 1926, not to go to Mexico City in answer to a summons of the Government, the only alternative was to take to the hills. He donned the dress of a peon, hid his graying hair under a ten-gallon hat with a lofty crown, and made his way to a lonely spot far from his archiepiscopal city. Here he lived for a year, changing his residence from time to time, as his whereabouts became suspected, and never losing touch with the affairs of his diocese. How he did this is a part of his story. At the end of a year, he moved in nearer to Guadalajara to another region, only sixty miles away. In this region about 15,000 people lived; every one of them, except about 300 Protestants, knew he was among them. Not one of them ever gave the secret away.

His is a story that has few equals in Catholic annals. Perhaps the nearest approach is that of another Bishop, by name Athanasius, who spent many years eluding the pursuing Arians around Alexandria in Egypt, and with the same gay, high-spirited, dashing glee in playing tricks on his enemies to throw them off the track. When the Mexican Archbishop, at the time of the settlement in 1929, came one day dramatically into Mexico City and appeared in the anteroom of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Ruiz, he asked for an audience with President Portes Gil. When he was received at the Palace, he spent some time telling how he had escaped the Federal police and soldiers. "You see," asked the President, "what a rotten police force I have?" "No," answered the Archbishop, "you see



what a fine guardian angel *I* have."

When in October, 1926, he had received word that he was to go to Mexico City with the other Bishops, he was placed in a difficult position. With the rigorous logic that distinguishes the Spanish mind (he was of course of Spanish descent) he reasoned thus: "If I go, it means eventual exile. If I remain, it means I must hide. I will hide." He went to the telegraph office, wrote out a telegram, sent it off, and galloped out of the city. He had had the punctilio to wire the Secretary of State that he was going into hiding.

He lived a cruel, hard life in hiding. He avoided the haciendas—the big farm houses—and lived on the hills or in secluded valleys with the Indians in their huts. He brought his Seminarians out with him and divided them into five groups of twenty each. Their training went on under their professors, and three times there during the three years he ordained to the priesthood those who were ready. Once one of these groups was surrounded by the soldiers, who would certainly have killed them, and the Archbishop choked with laughter when he told me how they had escaped—by their ability to run! I asked him if his health had not suffered, and he told me that twice he had been prostrated by malaria, but a priest had cured him by injecting quinine, and he felt his leg where the needle had pricked.

"But," he went on, "I suffered more in the heart. When news would come that another of my priests had been murdered, I had a real pain here." And he held his side.

"How many of Your Grace's priests were murdered?"

Twenty-two. . . .

He was taken care of by a faithful young Indian, whom we will call Serapio.

"Oh, he was faithful!" he once told me. "I lived sixty miles from Guadalajara. Once a week he left for the city with my mail, on foot. He started at five in the evening. At five in the morning he lay down for two hours' rest. At seven he rose, and at eight he was in the city. There he made his rounds delivering his mail to five different persons, none of whom knew the others were receiving any, and receiving from them the mail they had received. At nightfall he started back and at eight in the morning he was with me again."

That Indian's adventures would fill a chapter of this book. He was once forced to accept an invitation from a policeman, before he had made his rounds, to a drink in a barroom. He raised his glass as the others did, and poured its contents down his shirtfront. Once his feet got sore, and the Archbishop bought him a horse. That was the only time he was in any real danger, for on a turn of a road he ran plump into a cavalry regiment and escaped by a miracle, and hard riding. He always walked after that. He could do anything. Once he brought a

radio to the Archbishop, and rigged it up all by himself. Later a friend presented him with an automobile, and on his regular visits to the city he took lessons in running it, and one fine day drove it triumphantly out to the Archbishop.

Then he persuaded the Archbishop to let him drive him into the city, and on four or five occasions at dusk they drove in with the car crowded with friends, and the Archbishop in the middle of them, and toured the streets of the city for two hours! I made a private bet that the others in that car had concealed weapons about them.

I once had the temerity to ask His Grace if he really and truly had taken no part in the revolution which convulsed six States in Mexico.

He answered gravely: "I have examined my conscience on the matter. I can honestly say that I did not. I even suspended two of my priests who, goaded beyond their strength, did take arms.

"Of course," he added with a twinkle, "during the Russo-Japanese war, some of my friends were for Japan and some were for Russia. You can say that in the religious revolt, my sympathies were not with Calles. But I am absolutely guiltless of having taken arms, or of having directed those who took arms, or of any part in the fighting." He must be believed.

I asked him how he spent his time during those three years. He read Hergenroether's "History of the Church" and Pastor's, and Padre Murillo's fine commentary on Genesis, and Durand's commentaries, and many pious books. And of course some works of Spanish literature, too. Serapio carried them out to him.

But mostly he was taken up with the affairs of his diocese, with his Seminarians, whom he saw from time to time, and with his priests. He was hunted assiduously. I must confess that he never seemed much impressed with the dangers of his existence those three years.

He did not even have many narrow escapes. The nearest perhaps was when he was brought word that General Ferreira, with the Governor and a member of Parliament on a junket, was approaching with one thousand men to clean up his district, in which they suspected he was hiding. He jumped on a horse, rode off on a bias for four hours, and set up a new archiepiscopal residence. When the soldiers came, they did not find him.

"But," he said with mock seriousness, "one thousand soldiers to capture poor me!"

He would grow much more excited in remembering how a poisonous snake had once crawled over his bare feet when he was sitting reading in an Indian's hut.

As a result of the so-called agreement with the Mexican Government in

1929, he was forced to go into exile, as a sort of offering by the Church for the sake of peace. He wandered around, always ill at ease, now in Europe, now in the United States. Once he went back to Mexico, but he was soon deported again.

At length, in 1935, I met him in New York. He told me he had determined to go back to Mexico, even in spite of laws against him.

"But you can't go back," I protested; "this time they will kill you."

"I do not care," he replied. "I cannot die in this country."

So back he went, and there he died, at peace with the world and with God, on February 18, 1936.

Archbishop Orozco was not the only, nor the only important, figure to suffer the penalty of exile, which, by the way, is an entirely illegal penalty for a Mexican and implicitly forbidden by the Constitution. Others had suffered it before him; and I might say here, because the point has been misunderstood, that there was no Bishop, to my knowledge, who left the country and came to the United States voluntarily. Be it said for the Mexican Episcopate that they stood by their flocks until they were forcibly deported.

I was in the South in the Spring of 1927 when I received a telegram from New York asking me to go to San Antonio immediately to assist six Mexican Bishops in making a statement to the American people. I had been looking into ways and means of smuggling into Mexico the great war correspondent, Francis McCullagh, who had sent out from Russia the news of the trial of Msgr. Budkiewicz and Archbishop Cieplak. Mr. McCullagh had just finished a long tour of South America, and had arrived in London two weeks before. He wrote me asking if I would be interested in any stories about that country, and I replied by cable that I wanted him to go to Mexico and get its story. He replied that he would come immediately on receipt of enough money. An appeal to the Knights of Columbus brought sufficient out of their Mexican fund and in two days Mr. McCullagh was on the *Mauretania* on the high seas. He eventually got into Mexico by disguising himself as a farmer interested in cultivating winter tomatoes in Mexico—though I must say that he did not need much disguise, after his wanderings on the Amazon and in Paraguayan and Bolivian jungles.

When I arrived in San Antonio I found there the aged and infirm Archbishop Mora y del Rio, Archbishop Ruiz y Flores, Bishop Valdespino, Bishop Navarrete and two others, who had been hustled unceremoniously out of Mexico City, and under a guard of soldiers taken to the border. San Antonio was bristling with spies. One Mexican followed me about wherever I went, and one day I was accosted on the street by name by a man behind huge black spectacles, who upon being requested to remove them, revealed himself as a well-known

operative of the intelligence service of one of our own Government Departments. He had had a long experience in Mexico, by the way.

Several days with the Mexican Bishops revealed a harrowing story of alarms, privation, and danger. Bishop Valdespino, as I have recounted, had spent several weeks in prison, and the disease which was soon to take him off, was already on his face. Bishop Navarrete, one of the Mexican Church's heroes for his utter disregard for personal danger, and "Bishop of the Yaquis" in Sonora, smouldered with hidden fires behind his face.

The spokesman for the group was Archbishop Ruiz, of Morelia in Michoacan. Because his State, one of the most Catholic in Mexico, had broken out in open rebellion against the Government, he had been compelled to go to Mexico City in sheer protection of his existence. He there acted as Vice-Chairman of the Bishops' Committee, to assist Archbishop Mora, whose increasing weakness made it necessary to have by his side an experienced and more vigorous mind. Archbishop Ruiz had been a Bishop since his thirties, and he united an acute perception to dogged persistence, which I have learned comes from a deep habit of personal prayer.

Some weeks before, at Limon, in the State of Jalisco, a group of Cristeros had attacked a train which was protected by a company of fifty-two soldiers. It was known that the train carried 100,000 pesos, hence the large escort. The rebel troops were commanded by the priest Vega, of whom I spoke above, and every man of the Federal troops was killed and the money taken.

This incident was made the occasion of a tremendous world-wide agitation by the Calles Government, which attempted to make it appear that now here at last was the proof that the Church was openly implicated in the rebellion. To this were added lurid details of civilian passengers being burned alive or shot as they emerged from the burning coaches. This official story has, in fact, been accepted at its face value by writers like Gruening and Beals. Unlike other stories which they personally investigated, however, this one rests wholly on the handouts of Government publicity offices in Mexico City. I have never been able to discover that the "atrocities" amounted to more than the accidental killing of one or two passengers, who got in the line of fire between the Federals in their armored car and the shooters in the bush beside the track.

For this event, the Government used a new designation which it had invented in the case of Bishop Diaz, whose story I will tell later. The Bishops were said to be the "intellectual authors" of the alleged outrage. If the Government had only known, it was the very thing which the militant Catholics then, as now, accused the Bishops of not being, the powers behind the armed defense of their liberties. But a flood of accusations against them came out of

Mexico.

Archbishop Ruiz's statement, concurred in by the other Bishops present, tells the graphic story of their arrest and deportation:

"During these first days of our exile, we have been deeply grieved to read of the atrocious calumnies leveled against us by the Mexican Government. We now speak only under the necessity of answering a Government which believes it necessary thus to bolster up its outrageous campaign against religion.

"Before all we declare that we and all our priests and many laymen are victims of the cruelest religious persecution of modern times. Both the laws passed and the inhuman application of them are proof enough of that.

"Never have we wished to bring about foreign intervention of arms against our beloved Mexico. In 1924, and on various occasions since that year, Mexican Bishops have used their moral influence to avert such intervention. We now repeat the disapproval with which we look on it. We repudiate it with all our force. We associate ourselves in this repudiation with the American Episcopate in its magnificent pastoral letter of last December.

"But Calles has not hesitated to give proofs of his mendacity to achieve his nefarious ends. The pastoral letter enumerated and disproved the calumnies whose clamor has filled the world. The Mexican Government has not changed. It is still engaged in the ancient game, and now adds hypocrisy to calumny when it declares it has been 'lenient' in 'allowing' us to depart.

"Let us tell the truth about that. At seven P.M. on April 21, six of the fifteen Bishops, including Archbishop Mora y del Rio, ranking prelate, and Archbishop Ruiz, sequestered in the capital, were called by Minister of the Interior Tejeda to his office. He told us that by the President's orders we must leave the country that night. He said:

" 'You are the leaders of the revolution, and by your silence after the Archbishop of Durango's recent pastoral letter declaring lay Catholics justified in resorting to arms in self-defense, you were guilty of taking part in rebellion.'

"This was his only declaration. He offered no proofs. Archbishop Mora y del Rio of Mexico City answered the Minister thus:

" 'Sir, the Episcopate has promoted no revolution. It has, however, declared that laymen have the immemorial right to defend by force the inalienable rights which they could not protect by peaceful means.'

" 'That is rebellion,' said the Minister.

" 'It is no rebellion,' answered the Archbishop. 'It is self-defense against unjustifiable tyranny.'

" 'Against legal authority,' put in the Minister.

" 'As for the authority of your Government,' said the Archbishop, 'the whole

world knows the illegality of the elections which brought it into power.'

"The Minister then said: 'This is no time for argument.'

"He gave a sign to Colonel Delgado, Chief of the Secret Service; we were led thence under an armed guard of soldiers, and at nine o'clock that same night we were on our way to Laredo. Arrived there, what was our surprise to read a bulletin issued by the Government, saying we had been offered our choice of undergoing trial for treason or voluntarily leaving the country, and that we had chosen the second and voluntarily gone into exile. It further said that these six were the leaders of the revolt. It lied. These were merely six who happened to be arrested out of fifteen, all of whom had held out against armed rebellion. Nor was there ever any alternative offered of a trial.

"The Mexican Constitution itself forbids the penalty of exile to be inflicted on a Mexican, and it forbids any penalty to be imposed without a trial. Thus the President by one act made himself legislator, witness, prosecutor, judge, and executioner.

"The attack on the Guadalajara train on April 18 has been an occasion for the calumny that the Episcopate were its authors. This is false, as was the assertion that priests had taken part in it.

"Archbishop Orozco has been another victim of calumny. To protect his liberty he hid himself away last October, and the angry Government spread the story that he was at the head of an armed force. It is as false as the other story. Several priests were also accused of being under arms. This, too, is false. Some priests offered to be chaplains for the forces of the national revolt. None, as far as we know, has taken up arms. If any did, they would meet with our reprobation. Yet, to our knowledge, seven priests have been brutally murdered by Federal soldiers, and not even on the pretext of taking up arms. On mere suspicion, and with no motive but hate, many laymen, even boys, have suffered atrocious torment and death.

"To the American public we have only this to say: Our presence here is proof enough that we are the victims of unjust physical force. It pains us beyond words that we should likewise be the victims of calumny and slander. As your President on Monday declared his deep mistrust of the present Mexican Government on the economic issue, so we by too bitter experience know how little can its propaganda be trusted on the religious issue. We know the deep sympathy of the American people for the oppressed Mexican people, and that is the only thing that consoles us in our suffering."

The statement was universally interpreted as a correct presentation of the relations between the Church and the Government, and made an excellent impression on American and world opinion. It completely wiped out the memory

of the attack at Limon.

## CHAPTER VI

### VEILED HEROINES

A CATHOLIC PHYSICIAN was driving his car through Wall Street one afternoon in September, 1926, when he saw two Sisters wandering along that unaccustomed thoroughfare as if they were lost. He did not know their habit, which was white, with a flaming red monstrance on the breast, covered by a black cloak. He spoke to them, and found they spoke only Spanish. As good fortune had it, he spoke that language easily.

They were Mexican Sisters, and they came from a boat that lay at Pier 8 in the East River. From the upper deck of their boat they had seen through the forest of office buildings the spire of St. Patrick's Cathedral. These two set out to find it. They had got as far as Wall Street, and were then like babes in the wood. The good doctor took them to see St. Patrick's, and brought them back to their boat. Then he went to a telephone and called the offices of *America*.

An expedition to Pier 8 revealed that there were thirty-two Sisters in all, from four different congregations, and they were all natives of Mexico. Their convents had been broken up and dispersed and they had sailed from Tampico on this boat which was bound for Barcelona, Spain. The younger ones were convulsed with laughter at the recollection of the daring and imagination of an American *caballero*, a United States consul, who had fitted them out with passports and a complete and individually different biography for each one, which he made up out of his own head. All of them were very sad to leave their native land, but all were holding their heads high. They had suffered for the Faith. One of them, a Carmelite, a little Indian woman, had lost her habit, and was in rags.



The New Yorkers who saw them thus had the persecution brought before them in a vivid fashion. A hurriedly formed committee got them all they wanted, even to a complete Carmelite habit for the Indian woman, along with food and money. A cablegram to Barcelona insured them a royal welcome in the port of Christopher Columbus.

In a way, the Sisters of Mexico suffered the most. Every convent in the Republic was dispersed by the Calles laws of 1926. The Sisters, whether they were teaching or nursing the sick or contemplatives, were put out on the street. Some of them, many of them, went home to live with their families until the storm should pass. Those who had no families, or who still persisted in the desire for a community life, took the sad road of exile. Every port of Spain and South America, and many a port and railroad station in the United States, saw groups of them in 1926 and 1927. They spread the story of the horror of life in Mexico all over the world.

One of their number, however, achieved the sad eminence of world-wide notoriety for herself. She was one of the real tragedies of the Calles Revolution.

Maria Concepcion Acevedo y de la Llata was the Superior of a convent of Capuchin nuns. When her convent was dispersed she took refuge in a private house and there she lived with some of the Sisters. The story which follows I translate, in all its moving simplicity, from an appeal by her lawyers in a judicial process in her case.

"The seventeenth day of July of 1928, José de Leon Toral fired several shots at General Alvaro Obregon, depriving him of life, at a time when he, with a group of his friends, was eating in the Restaurant La Bombilla, situated in San Angel, D.F. José de Leon Toral was immediately taken into custody and conducted to the General Police Headquarters.

"The following day José de Leon Toral, whose name they did not even know then, notwithstanding the treatment which they gave him and which is known to all the world, finally declared that he was ready to reveal his name, and the name and domicile of his family and of all his friends; but he made supplication that before he did that he be permitted to solicit the counsel and advice of one person.

"Those who were conducting the inquiry yielded to the supplication of de Leon Toral and took him to the place which he indicated, which place turned out to be the house, on the Calle de Zaragoza in this city, where lived with other nuns the señorita Maria Concepcion Acevedo y de la Llata, and she to be the person from whom the accused wished to ask advice.

"The señorita Acevedo seeing come to the door of her house José de Leon Toral, covered with blood, maltreated, and all his clothes torn, asked him if he

would enter, and as he said, yes, she invited him in. At the same time entered all those who had accompanied Toral, policemen and friends of General Obregon.

"De Leon Toral then told señorita Acevedo that the preceding day he had put General Obregon to death, and that they held him at the police station, and that he had not revealed the names of himself or of his family or of his friends; but that at the station they had told him that his parents, his wife, and his children were there, too, and that they all would have to go through what he had undergone and that in his presence they would dash his children's heads against the ground and that if he made known any other person guilty of the crime both of them would be killed immediately, but that his kin would be released immediately and nobody else would be prosecuted; and so in such condition he asked her to help him.

"Señorita Acevedo, who always considered that her mission was to sacrifice herself for her neighbor and whose greatest illusion was to be a martyr, was much moved by the narration of de Leon Toral, especially that about his children, and asked him if in reality after killing her and him they would kill nobody else, and as he responded that so they had solemnly promised him and asked her if really she was ready to sacrifice herself and die with him, she answered, yes, that she was ready to give her life for her neighbor. That same day the señorita Acevedo was conducted to police headquarters."

All this latter part is transcribed from the stenographic report.

So Toral made a full confession of all his doings for some weeks; he swore that Mother Conchita, as she was affectionately known, had once told him and others that the persecution would end only with the death of Calles and Obregon (about whom it is known she had a real obsession, keeping two live tarantulas in cages on the altar in her house, to which she used to talk, and calling them Calles and Obregon), but he went to his death swearing that neither she nor any living soul had known that he was to kill Obregon.

No other evidence than the foregoing was ever produced, and in her trial every constitutional guarantee was violated. She was convicted, and sentenced to twenty years in prison.

There were many suspicious circumstances about the murder of Obregon. Toral, when he was brought before Calles, was asked by him:

"Who told you to kill Obregon?"

And Toral answered, "You did."<sup>1</sup>

It was known some hours in advance by at least one member of a United States Government intelligence service that Obregon was to be murdered. Morones, Calles' Minister of Labor and head of the Mexican Federation of Labor, went into hiding immediately after the murder. He had more than once

threatened to kill Obregon, who was his bitter enemy. Under pressure of popular opinion, Calles was forced to dismiss him from the Cabinet, and he has been under a cloud ever since. The body was spirited off to Sonora at once, so it was impossible to verify the rumor that it had fourteen bullet holes in it. Toral's gun held six bullets. The Obregon family is firmly convinced that the General was done to death by Calles himself, who actually was fired at during the Obregon funeral. And finally, it was perfectly well known that Obregon was already engaged in negotiations to settle the religious question. Secret threats were made that if he ever did he would be killed immediately.

Mother Conchita was sent to the Islas Marias, Mexico's Devil's Island in the Pacific, and while there was governess of the children of the Director of the prison, General Múgica. Later, she was married to another prisoner, named Castro Balda, condemned on a dynamiting charge. She had, of course, been automatically released from her vows before this. While in Mexico City, whither she had been brought to testify in another case, she wrote a series of articles in the Government press, bitterly attacking the Archbishop of Mexico City and the Apostolic Delegate.

Thus in Mother Conchita to every kind of vexation and trouble, there was added for the Mexican Church also the martyrdom and the humiliation of disgrace in the person of one of those whom Catholics are accustomed to regard with affection and pride.

To be a Sister in those days was to live a life of the greatest excitement. For some unknown reason, Government officials, even before the Calles laws, and in fact all through the Carranza Revolution, had never left the convents alone. I have before me an official ecclesiastical report on the state of thirty communities in the West, who were engaged in teaching.

Every one of them tells of living in a constant *qui vive*. They never could tell when the Government inspectors would be among them. From 1924 on, there was a constant succession of invasions, expulsions, arrests, and the strange, obstinate refusal of the nuns to confess themselves beaten. Put them out of their college or academy, and within two weeks they were back in another, which they rented from somebody. Or dressed in secular clothes a group of them would set up one school in five different places, with one or two classes in each of them. In many cases, they had finally to admit themselves beaten, and the community was dissolved.

Here, for instance, were the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. In March, 1925, a battalion of troops surrounded their college, where fifty Religious gave elementary and secondary instruction to a large number of girls. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed in the chapel, and at the first alarm the Sister who was

taking her turn before the altar, seized the monstrance, and hiding it under a cloak, ran to a room in the cellar. There she remained all through the long and patient inspection of every corner of the house, and though the officer in charge passed by her several times, and in fact once stepped on a corner of her cloak, he never saw her. The Sisters were all expelled, but retired to a private house, and there all through the night they remained in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament which they exposed there. These Sisters finally went to San Francisco, where they now are. Their college was reopened by alumnae of the college, but by 1928 the chase became too hot and it was closed.

Another college of this Congregation had a similar fate. On August 18, 1925, the college was invaded by troops and a crowd of hangers-on from the low quarters of the city. Everything was sacked and stolen. The Sisters dispersed and lived among various private families who took them in. Then in September they hired another large place, and carried on. Later, after the troubles abated, they made bold application to the Government for authorization for the new college which was now called Christopher Columbus, and was to all intents and purposes a private academy conducted by lay ladies not living in community. Every once in a while the police had come, and one day a Sister was sent out hurriedly to tell the chaplain not to come to say Mass, as a guard was there on duty. The Sister was arrested and somebody had to bribe the police with \$200 to let her go. This kind of thing had been going on all along, and one is not surprised to read that finally in 1933 they gave up, and dispersed among private families or lived on private charity.

In Ejutla and Colima these same Sisters had the same kind of harried life. In fact, in March, 1929, seventeen of them from Ejutla were bundled off in a train to Mexico City, and there they lay in prison for a month. In Colima they carried on in rented places of one kind or another until the final suppression in 1934.

And so it went on. The Carmelites of Atotonilco saw five of their number in prison. In Guadalajara, they were dispersed, but at Ocotlan, for some strange reason, they went right on living, and all the persecution they have to report is that they suffered from repeated visits from inspectors. The report of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Guadalajara is eloquent in its simplicity: "The persecution consisted in not being able to find any place to lodge the Sisters, because nobody dared to rent us a house." The Missionaries of Guadalupe were sent to prison for 24 hours, and received "*malos tratamientos*—bad treatment."

The Franciscan Sisters seem to have been particularly obstinate in carrying on their colleges. One group had a kind of house-to-house academy, another carried on with a secular director, but had to stop because they could no longer pay her salary, and another, which conducted an asylum for orphans, suffered the

anguish of seeing the children dumped out on the street. One of them carried on under a secular director right up to 1933, but had to stop when the order for sexual education came along. Many Sisters must have been a continual burden to their friends, who had to bail them out of jail or bribe the police inspectors. One lady had to put down 200 pesos in this way to get two Dominican Sisters out of the city prison.

Five Franciscan Tertiaries at a place called San Martin de Bolanos had a different kind of adventure. The troops came galloping in, put the Sisters on horses, man fashion, and galloped off with them. The Superior, who probably had never ridden a horse any fashion, fell off during the wild ride, and broke her collar bone. The details are silent about this terrible experience, but the Sisters were with the soldiers one month. They were finally brought all the way to Mexico City, where they were set at liberty.

The inspectors of police must have suspected that all the private schools that were apparently conducted by lay people were in reality religious establishments. So they were continually popping in to see if religious instruction was being given. If some poor Sister was careless enough to leave her prayer book lying around, that was enough. Off to prison with all of them; confiscation of the premises; and heavy fines to get them all out again. So they had to begin all over, but as one Sister naively remarks, "we redoubled our vigilance."

During the Cristero rebellion the pretext was to hunt for arms or refugee soldiers. So sudden descents were always being made on their houses—and apart from the inconvenience, for the visits were usually at night, the Sisters complained that the soldiers frequently left nothing of any value behind.

One very curious incident reveals the wild chaos of minds that existed. In one of the convents was a novice who was a relative of the Superintendent of Schools. This girl, it seems, did not measure up to the qualifications of the Community, so she was refused her profession, and had to leave. The worthy Superintendent took umbrage at this, so he tipped off the police that the establishment was really run by Religious, and it was raided by the soldiers. But the Sisters were in turn tipped off that the raid was coming, and they had time to remove anything of value, and anything that betrayed the nature of the place. Then the chief of police told the Superior that she should be careful, for the Superintendent of Schools had marked out her establishment for destruction.

The Superior then found a way out. The sister of one of the Novices was herself a school teacher. She went to the Superintendent with a friend of his, and petitioned for a license to open a college. The gentleman gave her the permission, and then she opened one up under a new name and "hired" all the

Sisters who had been teaching in the other one! This went on for a year or two, when the landlady put them all violently out in the street, because she had heard it said in the streets that it was a Catholic school and she was afraid she would lose the whole place, the law having turned itself in that direction.

The same things were always happening to hospitals. One hospital which I visited was apparently a private hospital conducted by a group of doctors, with a charitable layman as head of the board of trustees. It was a magnificent new establishment, up to date, cool and airy, with a patio full of flowers and shrubs. It was whispered to me that the nurses I would meet would be all Sisters, but I was warned to call them "Señorita" and not to let on before the patients, who did not know themselves that their nurses were Sisters, and might give the whole thing away.

Other hospitals were not so fortunate, or prudent, as this one. They were constantly being raided, for everybody knew that Mexico had very few trained nurses outside of the Religious Orders, and the presumption was that if a hospital was running at all, it was Sisters who were doing it. So frequently they were raided and closed. But the chances were nine out of ten that within a month a new hospital would open up in the vicinity, under a new director, and things would go on as usual—until the next time.

The Sisters would not be Mexicans, or Religious, if they did not see a great deal of fun in all this. It was rare to meet one who had not her eyes full of laughter as she told of her misadventures. The game of hide-and-seek that they played for many years sharpened their wits, and gave them more confidence in God. It was a miracle that so many of them preserved their religious spirit on so high a plane. Mother Conchita was the one terrible exception.

## CHAPTER VII

### THREE MONTHS

I HAVE NOT ATTEMPTED to tell the whole story of these terrible years, 1926-1929. A temporary solution was waiting just around the corner, but before I pass on to this, I must ask the reader to go hurriedly with me through the recital of the events of three months which I compiled from affidavits submitted to me. These three months can be taken merely as typical of the rest. Each story is a tragedy in miniature and could be told in as much detail as those which have gone before. I have compressed each in a paragraph, and will allow the reader to enlarge them as he will in his own imagination.

December 28, 1927. The Mayor of Cocula, Jalisco, entered into one of the churches of the city with a group of men; took out all the statues and religious objects and burnt them all. The organ was burnt inside of the church. Some of the men put on the sacerdotal vestments and started a dance around the fire.

December 30. Agents of Calles disguised as priests heard the confessions of the country people, in order to obtain evidence, through their confessions, that they were connected with the movement of revolt. After this evidence had been obtained, the people, who believed they had been heard by a priest, were imprisoned, and some murdered.

December 31. A telegram from the Mexican capital to *El Diario de El Paso* informs that Rev. N. N. was requested by a group of secret service men to attend a man on his dying bed. He suspected they were setting a trap for him, and refused to leave his home. The men took him out by force; they whipped a boy and the priest's sister. Father N. N. was taken out without even a coat and kept in prison for three days. Later on he was deported and nobody knows where he was

sent.

December 31. A priest was captured at Múzquiz, Coahuila, for having officiated privately, was fined \$50, and after he had paid was deported to the City of Mexico.

January 2, 1928. One of the altars of the church of St. Joseph (San José de Gracia) in Oaxaca was burnt by agents of the Government.

January 4. The (American) National Council of Catholic Women called the attention of President Coolidge to their letter of December 27, stating the following facts:

A. Seventeen women were captured in a suburb of the City of Mexico on account of their belonging to a Catholic Religious Order, and devoting their lives to prayer. They were sent to the prison of the police headquarters, under accusation of having violated the anti-religious laws.

B. The hands of the Rector of the parish church of Tamazula were cut off to prevent his ever saying Mass. The mutilation killed him.

C. A prize has been offered for the head of Archbishop Orozco y Jimenez, to be delivered dead or alive. He is charged with being an armed rebel, though he had plainly declared that he had nothing to do with the armed movement.<sup>1</sup>

January 2. Attempts made to burn down the Church of Jesus and Mary in the City of Mexico.

January 5. Rev. Pablo Garcia de Jesús Maria, Aguascalientes, who was in hiding, as all priests now are in Mexico, was denounced and deported by orders of General Palma. At the station of Santa Maria, Father Garcia gave absolution to a man dying of a gun-shot wound. For this cause alone the guards broke his hand and mutilated him in his ears, nose, tongue, and eyes. He died in the train and the soldiers dropped his body at the station of Encarnación de Diaz, where they abandoned it.

January 7. All churches in the State of Tabasco were seized by the Government. The Cathedral has been turned into a school, and all sacred objects were stolen.

January 10. A group of Federal soldiers took out, desecrated, and destroyed the statues from two churches in Zacatecas.

January 5. A priest and a young man, brother of the Licenciado Anacleto González Flores, one of the first persons sacrificed for the cause of Christ on April 1, 1927, were shot. The young man was killed for publishing a small newspaper in connection with the religious persecution.

January 10. At Tepetitlán, Jalisco, officers of the Calles army searched all churches and private homes and looted them of all sacred objects. Later on they profaned the sacred utensils and passed through the streets drunk and showing



them as their trophies.

January 25. The police raided the Catholic school of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and imprisoned twenty-one nuns and two lay teachers. The school was closed.

January 28. Bulletins issued by the Department of the Interior declares the crime of the Sisters just mentioned was that of teaching the Catholic religion, and performing acts of worship. The nuns were deported.

January 30. Police closed the offices of the Catholic Social Secretariate, Mexico City.

January 30. Another Catholic school closed at Pino Suarez 44 and 45, Mexico City, on account of giving religious instruction and holding Catholic worship.

January 30. The Government seized the Seminary of the City of Mexico and the building of the School of St. Joseph. Seminary priests and students taken to prison. Capture of Bishop de la Mora ordered by President Calles through his staff.

February 5. Report in *Diario de El Paso* of young Antonio Ybarra, of Cotija, Michoacan, who was cruelly maltreated by soldiers. Before he was hanged, he made an effort to hold himself up with one hand, and loosening the rope around his neck, shouted, "Long live Christ the King!" His mother told the soldiers that she had three other sons, whom she was willing to offer yet to her God.

February 7. Father P. M. Pérez, Rector of the parish church in Salamanca, was imprisoned in that city, under the false pretense that he was implicated in the armed movement; was sent from Salamanca to Irapuato and murdered on the road. Another priest was murdered in the same way at Querétaro.

February 9. Three priests imprisoned for saying Mass at private houses.

February 10. Priests detained under imputation of connection with the armed movement.

February 12. Father Juniper de la Vega, O.M.F., and Brother Humble Martínez, after imprisonment at Zamora, were shot on the road between Zamora and Yurécuaro, Michoacan. Their story has been told in [Chapter III](#).

February 17. Three priests exiled to the United States.

February 18. Seminary of Puebla closed, and the Rector, three priests, and fourteen lay professors imprisoned.

A letter from Guanajuato, February 19, speaks of the sufferings of people concentrated at Purisima, where smallpox is spreading in an awful way; so much that sick people are taken to the cemetery and abandoned there to die. The writer describes a terrible instance in which a woman was buried though she was not

dead, in the presence of her little daughter, already suffering herself from the dread disease.

February 20. Twelve priests imprisoned at San Luis Potosi and Puebla, were deported to Mexico.

February 21. Bishop Amora of Tamaulipas deported to the United States. His host also captured, with three priests.

February 26. News of February 20 informs that Canon Angel Martínez, of the Cathedral of León, and his brother, Augustín Martínez, were brutally assassinated at Pueblo Nuevo, Guanajuato, their birthplace.

Letter from Guanajuato, February 29, 1928: village church made a barracks; Canon Martínez and his brother Augustín killed; murder of Father Daniel Pérez at Irapuato, thereby proving falsity of accusation against Father Pérez of participation in the rebellion.

March 7. From Dolores Hidalgo, Guanajuato, wire that a priest was taken from that town to Victoria where he was shot before the public; also news that on March 2 five other priests were shot, their names concealed by the authorities.

March 4. Father Toribio Romo, greatly respected, taken from Guadalajara to a suburb and murdered. The assassins refused to say where the body was.

March 15. Father Villareal and five civilians, Méndez, Zamarrón, Grimaldo, Montoya, and Velásquez, taken prisoners, submitted to a mock court martial (entirely illegal since they were all civilians), and immediately taken to the Suacito cemetery where they were shot, as reprisals for lack of success in capturing Bishop de la Mora, whose residence was raided and looted.

March 15. *El Universal Gráfico* of Mexico City gives names of the priest professors of the diocesan Seminary who are yet in prison owing to inability to pay the fines imposed. Speaks also of "hundreds of priests who have been arrested recently until the cells of police headquarters could no longer contain the prisoners."

March 15. Father Osorio Leyva, who was arrested recently and charged with distributing literature censuring Calles' anti-religious laws was condemned by the police to Islas Marias, "Mexico's terrible island penal colony."

To these I add other accounts which reached me from good sources.

On October 17, 1927, while the nuns were working at their college in San Miguel el Alto, a general, a major, and a group of soldiers, after having looted the house, made prisoner the Superior and four Sisters, who were kept there till November 7, when they were taken to the barracks at San Juan. The nuns were conducted by 300 soldiers from San Juan to Santa María; there kept in a warehouse and finally taken in a cattle car to the dungeons of the barracks at

Lagos. After a gentleman had given a bond of \$3,000 they were set free.

Two young men, R. Melgarejo and Joaquín Silva Cordoba, were murdered at Zamora, Michoacan Melgarejo was compelled to shout "Long Live Calles!" Instead, however, he shouted, "Long Live Christ the King!" The soldiers then began to cut off his ears, and having obtained no better results, they cut off his tongue. Young Silva embraced him, and the soldiers shot the group, killing the two young men.<sup>2</sup>

Miss Maria Guadalupe Chaires, from Ciudad Victoria, was captured so that she might inform where the Rector of a church and some Catholics were hidden. As she refused, soldiers began to tear off her fingers; the mutilation continued, until she became exhausted. They then finally killed her.

At Juanacatlan, Jalisco, the soldiers set fire to the church. Catholics tried to put out the fire, and the former killed them with machine guns.

Manuel Bonilla, a young man from Toluca, Mexico, was captured on Good Friday and his hands and feet were tied. At three o'clock in the afternoon they shot him.

Juan Sanchez, from Totatiche, Jalisco, was returning to his house from his work. Some soldiers asked him for the pass-word. He answered, "Christ the King." The soldiers then cut off one of his ears; he then shouted, "Long live Christ the King," and the soldiers cut off his tongue. He tried yet to proclaim his Faith and was stabbed.

Father Sabas Reyes, from Toluca, Jalisco, was shot; but before he died he was submitted to terrific torments. He was asked to tell where his pastor was hidden, and having refused, he was dragged along to the porch of the parish church. He was tied up against one of the columns in such a way that his feet could not rest upon the floor. The military chief and soldiers began to pinch him with their swords and bayonets. During three days he was maintained in that condition, exposed to the sun's rays as well as to the cold at night, and with no food. Finally the skin of his feet was removed, these were soaked with gasoline and burned out. He was then compelled to walk to the cemetery, where he was shot.

A letter of August 15, 1927, from Leon, Guanajuato, gave information that Anselmo Padilla was captured; the soldiers cut off his nose and made several cuts in his face, because he refused to cheer for Calles and shouted, "Long live Christ the King!" When he was almost exhausted, they tore off the skin of his feet and compelled him to walk upon fire. He died immediately afterwards.

A very well-known young man, Carlos Rincon Fregoso, was dreadfully mutilated at the Red Barracks, Guadalajara, and finally shot.

José Lopez, eighteen years old, had his tongue cut off and received several

wounds in the head before he died.

In the last days of January, 1928, soldiers of Gen. Anacleto Lopez captured and hanged in the public plaza, Jardin Paez, six peaceful farm laborers. To the body of one of them a poster was affixed, reading, "Presbitero Martínez" (Rev. Martínez), and General Lopez declared that the murdered man was a priest heading the rebellion.

A Sister declared with the date March 11, 1928: That when the Calles agents seized the Seminary they not only took out the priests and the students, but stole all the money and even the clothing that they found in the building;

That after demanding \$15,000 from the Mother Superior at the College of St. Teresa, towards which she raised \$10,000, they nevertheless proceeded against the college;

That the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, caring for wayward girls, are continually provoked by the authorities, with a view towards obtaining possession of their building;

That the Capuchin Sisters were brutally treated and marched through the streets by soldiers;

That when Rafael Chowell was arrested in Guanajuato, he was followed by his two daughters. On the way to Leon he was murdered so brutally that his body could not be shown.

Two more signed statements follow:

That at noon of August 7, 1927, while the Catholic Workmen's Association of Ciudad de Leon de los Aldama were holding their regular meeting, the hall was entered by General Sanchez, the Mayor, and others, who asked if this was one of the associations which spoke of Christ the King. Florentino Alvarez, the President, answered affirmatively. He and thirty members were taken prisoners. Three days later Mr. Alvarez was shot at 3 A.M. at El Puente de Jueso. He had been shot in the back and stabbed;

That Father Trinidad Rangel, priest at Silao, was in hiding at Leon, but having occasion to go to San Francisco del Rincon, was captured and his jaw broken;

That Father Sola, also hidden at Leon, was denounced by an informer, his house looted by soldiers, and he and a young novice taken;

That Fathers Rangel and Sola, and the Seminarist, Perez, were sent in a repair train and were shot between the stations of Castro and Salas, near Lagos, Jalisco, in the presence of three young men who had also been taken prisoners. This was in April, 1927.

At Tula, Hidalgo, the Mother Superior of the nuns of Ejutla was shot and the other nuns were delivered to the soldiery. A signed statement as to this affair

says that the parish priest who was ill, was also shot by the soldiers under General Izaguirre, that his body and that of the Mother Superior were burned in a fire made of the images of the saints (*quemó en junta de los santos*), and the soldiers outraged the girls and women, as well as the nuns, some of whom they took with them when they left the town. The deponent relies upon the written testimony of a correspondent at Autlan, November 8, 1927.

In May, 1927, Father Felix Castañeda, at Juancho Rey, Zacatecas, was arrested. One of his captors put on the priest's cassock and asked him to confess. He and a small boy were then stabbed to death. Father Enrique Marquez, returning to Jerez, Zacatecas, from Rome, was also murdered. Father Mateo Correa, carrying the Blessed Sacrament to a sick man, was captured, tortured, and killed.

On January 28 of that year all the people living near Cubilete mountain were ordered to depart within twenty-four hours. On January 29 all the houses were burned, the people being concentrated at Leon or Silao.

On January 30, 1928, General Sanchez went to Laurel (a ranch), drove off the people and burned their homes. He killed thirteen men, as they were returning from work, without any excuse or warning, and took about forty others to Leon, where they were all killed. This leaves the women and children without homes or support.

On February 17, 1928, the Seminary at Puebla was closed. Four priests and fourteen lay teachers were imprisoned.

I have only one comment to add to this terrible recital. Francis McCullagh, who examined many of these facts, well known in Mexico, remarks that it is no wonder perhaps that the world press did not carry the story of them at the time, they are too horrible to believe. Yet they are only selected incidents which I was able to verify through reliable persons.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOLUTION?

DURING ALL THESE YEARS many vain attempts had been made to bring the two parties in the dispute to an agreement. The difficulty was that all such disputes are ended in Mexico on a basis of the *status quo nunc*, not the *status quo ante*. I mean that the party which is at odds with the State little by little loses some of its rights, and if it has used violence to defend them the reprisals that will follow will make it lose still more. Then comes the time for a settlement, and there is never any return to the former status of the offended party; things just go on from there. The State demands that it remain where it is now, and promises that it will make no further aggressions. Then, after a year or two, the impositions begin again, and if a new settlement is made you are just so much worse off.

This deliberate policy has worked again and again, as various companies in Mexico well know, particularly in the oil industry.

During 1926 to 1929 the Government stubbornly maintained a single front against the Church. "You have only to obey the laws," it repeated, "and all will be well." To obey the laws, however, was tantamount to committing suicide. The laws themselves were the persecution, answered the Church, we cannot obey them and remain a Church; their purpose is to destroy us.

It was pointed out that the various Protestant denominations were obeying the law. But the Catholic Church replied that the cases were different. There had never been any difficulty in principle for the Protestant Churches to make themselves a function of the State; they had almost all begun that way. Moreover, the Protestant missionaries were given many favors that were denied Catholics, particularly if they were of American origin. And finally, said the

Church, the Protestants are few in number, while the vast majority of the population is Catholic. The only solution, repeated the Bishops, is to change the Constitution by making it more responsive to the clearly defined mind and conscience of the citizenry, and not merely the expression of the philosophy of a few, backed up by their control of the army.

Hence the deadlock.

Yet the only three solutions were these: (1) to overthrow the Government by arms; (2) to change the regime at the polls by ballots at the next election; or (3) to bring about a gradual evolution towards sanity under the impulse of a controlled and enlightened public opinion among the people.

Now the violent overthrow of the Government seemed impossible to most observers. Much money was needed for arms, and money was lacking; if there had been any money to speak of, the arms would have to come from the United States, and the United States was firm in maintaining the embargo on arms exports to rebels in Mexico. It maintained a watchful patrol on the border, and was regularly arresting and convicting Mexicans and Americans who tried it. It even kept a close surveillance on people far removed from the border.

The only kind of armed Revolution that would have a good chance to succeed was the *cuartelazo*, a barrack revolt, in which some General went out with his troops. Generals Arnulfo Gomez and Francisco Serrano had a revolt like this in mind in 1927, but their plans were betrayed. Serrano was assassinated as he left a name-day party in Cuernavaca, and Gomez fled and was later captured and shot. In 1929, General Escobar went out with a few Generals favorable to Obregon, but he, too, lost out after several pitched battles.

Revolts like these placed Catholics in a bad position; it was impossible to believe that a General who came out of the Revolution would be very favorable to them as soon as he got in power, however flattering the promises he might make while suing for their support. On the other hand, this often seemed to be the only way in which some change might be made.

As for a change by ballots at elections, everybody was agreed that this was impossible, and it could be ruled out immediately. Were it not that some foreigners, not cognizant of political conditions in Mexico, were constantly blaming the voiceless and powerless majority there for "allowing" an obvious minority to remain in power, this alternative would not even be mentioned. It can be ruled out as outside the field of practical consideration.

A change of mind in the dominating party was something else again. The problem was how to bring it about. A guerrilla warfare by discontented elements defending their rights by force of arms would be undoubtedly a powerful incentive to the ruling forces to consider some alleviations of conditions for

Catholics. (As a matter of fact, such a warfare actually had a great influence on the outcome.)

The Constitution itself provided for its own amendment. To show how easily this could be done, one had only to point to the practical elimination in favor of Obregon of the provision that no President could be elected a second time—one of the fundamental aims of the Revolution, and to this day an official slogan of the Government, even after it exists no longer. The right of petition by citizens is a fundamental right. It is true that a monster petition signed by 2,000,000 citizens had already been rejected by the Congress, as I have narrated above.

In 1928, however, the time seemed propitious for another attempt along this line. Business in several States was at a standstill, and those some of the richest in the country, like Jalisco and Michoacan. The foreign debt had ceased to be served since November, 1927, as all available money had gone into military expenses. Mexico's credit was at a low ebb.

Accordingly, in September of that year, a weighty and moderate petition was drawn up and signed by about a hundred of the most prominent men in the civic and professional life of the country. In courteous and firm terms it set forth the denials of essential liberties contained in the Constitution.

"We do not ask," it went on, "union of Church and State; neither do we desire the subjection of the Church in spiritual matters to the State; nor do we desire any policy of dissimulation; what we petition is, as the former memorial of the Catholics expressed it, 'Liberty, and for all religions'; but an effective liberty, not one such as the present Constitution pretends to give us, which while it concedes liberty in general, denies and nullifies it in particular cases. That is not a true liberty, it is not the common law, it is not separation of Church and State, it is not the consecration of the human postulate of liberty of conscience and worship."

Under three headings, then, it summed up what was desired: (1) recognition of the existence and juridical personality of the several religious confessions; (2) recognition of separation and independence between the State and the divers religious confessions, and no legislation by the State in religious affairs; and (3) separation which would not be a regime of hostility but one of friendly cooperation for the common good.

The petition then went on to outline the amendments of the five Articles which bore on the question (3, 5, 24, 27, 130). There is no space for these suggested amendments here, but they were moderate and would have amply safeguarded the State against any possible imagined aggression by the Church. The signatures to the petition were a Who's Who of the non-political life of the



nation. In my files there is an accompanying private document from the Hierarchy substantiating and accepting the concessions made by the petition, and ending by saying that "its acceptance would automatically bring about the reopening of the churches and the ending of the religious conflict."

The expectation was a vain one. No more attention was paid to this memorial than had been paid to the one signed by the 2,000,000. Though the petition was submitted to Mr. Morrow, there was no sign that he considered it a practical way out of the deadlock. Yet had it been accepted, it would have been looked on as a most enlightened piece of statesmanship on the part of both the Church and the State.

Meanwhile, living in exile, there was one who was destined to play a great part in future events.

One day in January, 1927, a group of us had stood on a windy dock awaiting the arrival of a boat from Guatemala. Two weeks before, we had read in the news dispatches that Bishop Pascual Diaz, Secretary of the Bishops' Committee, had been summoned to the office of the Chief of Police, Roberto Cruz, and that since then nothing had been heard of him. The worst was feared.

Soon, however, came word that he had shown up on the borders of Guatemala, whither he had been dumped from an official Mexican automobile. From there he took ship for New York, and an official Catholic delegation, headed by Judge Alfred A. Talley, was there to receive him with flags and music. As the boat came near, we recognized him, looking curiously at the sights, a large swarthy figure, dressed in not-so-modish brown, with a flaming red necktie.

The formalities, including a long interview with the press, were followed by a triumphal procession through the streets of New York, behind a screaming-sired police escort of dimensions, to West Sixteenth Street. There the boys' band of St. Francis Xavier's High School was awaiting him. Their school was to be his home for many a weary month.

The next day he told me a story. It throws light on his character and on Mexico.

Days before his arrival rumors were floating among the Mexicans in New York that he would be assassinated if he came here. But he was very anxious to be off to tell his story to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington the very next day. So when I was getting his reservations, I asked the Pennsylvania Station Master, Mr. William Egan, for a little protection. I was told that we should enter by the private driveway of the Station, and not to pay attention to the men who might be strolling there.

Everything went very smoothly. The strolling men were there, looking not

at all like detectives, and we were quickly seated in our drawing room in the train.

The Bishop had not been told of the threats, and he noticed nothing unusual about the precautions that had been taken. So, when we were at rest, I told him about them, and added, jokingly, "But, of course, Your Excellency, being a Mexican, carries a gun with you."

His answer was a hearty laugh, and the story.

"I carried a gun only once in my life. It was in 1915. I was a simple priest then, Rector of the Sagrada Familia Church in Mexico. (Bishop Diaz was a Jesuit then.) The Provincial sent word to me that the Novitiate at El Llano in Zamora had been taken by the Carranza soldiers, and the Fathers there had been carried away. Only a Brother had been left in charge, but he, too, had vanished, leaving the money locked up somewhere, and all the young novices were left there without a shepherd.

"I bought a horse, a revolver, a big hat, and dressed like any Mexican farmer, set out on my way. Soon I fell in with a group of bandits and was elected their chief. We did not make much speed, but it seemed the safest way. We had a guide whose actions soon became suspicious, and so one day, outside an inn, where we had stopped, I called him over to me, laying my revolver on a little table between us.

" 'My friend,' said I, 'I suspect that you are taking us into the path of the Carranzistas. Well, you ride close by my side, and at the first cry of "Halt!" (taking up my revolver and putting it into his face) you will get the first bullet.' "

"What happened?" I asked.

"He fell on his knees, and begged for mercy. And sure enough, he led us around another way. He was a spy."

Then, as an afterthought, he added,

"Do you know, all the time I was on that trip, five days or more, I never missed saying Mass once."

It seems that when all his fellow-bandits were wrapped in sleep he would go to the village church, explain himself to the parish priest, and then long before dawn he would steal away again and say his Mass, and be sound asleep before the first bandit stirred in the morning.

His long days in New York had no excitement at all. They were a weary round of receiving visitors, of communications with his fellow-Bishops in Mexico and the United States (six of the former were deported in a body some months after him, including old Archbishop Mora, who was to die in exile) and of learning English, for he knew not a word of it when he arrived. His teacher was a boy from second-year high school, James Bacon Sullivan, who was very

strict with him. It was a treat to come into the Bishop's office and hear him being sharply reprimanded for having forgotten overnight the pronunciation of a difficult word like "thoroughfare." He took great delight in introducing James Bacon everywhere as "My teacher." And, be it said, James did a good job; for soon the Bishop was making speeches in English.

One incident during that time touched the prelate deeply. After a time he ceased to live at St. Francis Xavier's and through the charity of a friend, took an apartment down in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn, which meant that he had to come in every day to his office by subway. One morning, he was approached by an elderly Italian in working clothes, who asked him if he were "the exiled Bishop." Bishop Diaz said that he was, whereupon the Italian handed him furtively a crumpled greasy dollar, and asked him to say a Mass for him. He said he had watched the Bishop every day in the subway train, and greatly admired him. It was characteristic of the Bishop that he did the Italian the courtesy of taking his dollar, for he knew that that would make him proud and happy.

From the time that Bishop Diaz came to the United States he began to realize what a tragedy had been brought on his people by their decision to take up arms, and to wonder if the sacrifices were worth the possible effect. Living in New York, he must have felt as an enormous burden pressing down on him the power and wealth and indifference of this great country. It came home to him for the first time that to overthrow the Mexican Government involved something vastly harder than victory in the field over some Mexican armies; it would be necessary first to coerce the American Government. After Dwight Morrow made it clearly understood that he would not even consider any solution that meant a change of regime in Mexico, this suspicion became a conviction. As a Mexican, he was powerless to do anything about this. He merely had to rest in the deadening knowledge that as soon as the "Cristeros" became really dangerous to Calles, help would come to him to preserve him in power, as actually happened when Escobar revolted in 1929, along with other Obregonistas.

It is necessary to note in passing that Mr. Morrow's reasons for his stand were not adopted out of any love for Calles and his band, and still less for the principles enshrined in the Constitution of 1917. He made it clear that he was fully aware of the character of both. But, as he once put it to me, "We have this crowd partly 'educated,' and we will not start in all over again with another. We are working on them as we are doing with Russia. If you make them prosperous, they will become conservative. That is human nature."

It was in vain that I urged that, whatever might be the case with Russia, it would not work in Mexico. He would quickly discover that the more prosperous he made Calles and his "crowd," the more radical they would become, for they

would find that radicalism paid. His biographer, Harold Nicolson, has revealed that he stuck to his original program with extraordinary tenacity; he was sublimely certain that nobody could resist a treatment of kindness, sympathy, and understanding. And he poured out all of that on Calles, deliberately, almost cold-bloodedly. From the day of his coming to Mexico, all hope vanished of any help from the United States or of any radical solution of the Church's difficulties.

Mr. Nicolson has himself written the epitaph on Morrow's work in Mexico, in the biography which he wrote at the assignment of Mrs. Morrow:

"His practical achievement in Mexico was not either comprehensive, durable, or complete. The compromise which he contrived between the rights of American capital and the aspirations of Mexican nationalism was neither deep nor lasting. His negotiation of an armistice between Church and State led to no permanent settlement of that unhappy controversy. And he failed to induce the Mexican Government to establish their finances upon a far-seeing program rather than upon contracts of immediate expediency."<sup>1</sup>

As the two men responsible for the ecclesiastical policy in Mexico, Bishop Diaz and Archbishop Ruiz, who was also in exile and who had succeeded Archbishop Mora in 1928 as President of the Episcopal Committee, had no choice but to accept a realistic view of the situation once they beheld affairs down there from an outside point of view. But even they were dependent in all this upon the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, Archbishop (now Cardinal) Fumasoni-Biondi, who himself had already arrived at the same conclusion. Mr. Morrow seemed to be the one person who could intervene. And if his policy was the correct one, a thing which he never doubted to the end, then the Church issue was a challenge to him of its rightness. He had a further incentive in this, as his New York friends, among others John D. Ryan and Nicholas F. Brady, and also, as Mr. Nicolson reveals, Cardinal Hayes and Morgan O'Brien, had urged him to try his hand at it.

It was Mr. Morrow who brought Father John J. Burke, C.S.P., General Secretary of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, to Mexico with him to meet General Calles on April 4, 1928. Another meeting of Father Burke, accompanied this time by Archbishop Ruiz, took place with Calles on the following May 17, and a tentative agreement was made. The terms, in brief, were that the Government would cease to look upon the registration of priests as a licensing by the Government of their power to officiate, and that in return for this the Church would resume worship in the churches.

At this juncture an event occurred which caused much commotion at the time and has given rise to considerable misapprehension. It is thus reported by Harold Nicolson in his biography of Dwight Morrow:

"In passing through Paris, Monsignor Ruiz committed the imprudence of giving an interview to the press. The result was unfortunate. On the one hand it encouraged reactionary circles to urge on Rome that the draft agreement represented surrender on the part of the Church and would strengthen the bolshevik system of Plutarco Calles. On the other hand Calles himself was seriously embarrassed and threatened to publish the whole correspondence."<sup>2</sup>

It is true that these results followed the publication of the supposed interview. But the interview itself was a forgery. It never took place. What happened is related by Archbishop Ruiz himself in a letter of February 4, 1936, which I am privileged to quote:

"With regard to the work of Dwight Morrow, Mr. Nicolson says on page 343 that I committed the imprudence of giving an interview to the press on passing through Paris. This is absolutely false. I arrived in Paris between five and six in the evening. I transferred immediately to the station of the P. L. M., bought my ticket, took my supper in the restaurant of the station itself, and went immediately to the sleeper and left for Rome at seven. Nobody took notice of my passing through Paris and nobody interviewed me. In Rome I informed the Holy Father what had been done in accord with the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, but then followed the assassination of Obregon and everything was postponed."

What interests caused the interview to be sent out as if it had actually been given has never been ascertained.

The assassination of Obregon on July 17, 1928, for which the Church was blamed by Calles, and the ensuing rebellion in March, 1929, of General Escobar and other Obregonistas, who blamed Calles for it, put off any actual signing of terms.

In May, 1929, however, negotiations were resumed, again with the help of Mr. Morrow, and they resulted in an agreement on June 21, 1929, between Emilio Portes Gil, the Provisional President who had succeeded Obregon, and Archbishop Ruiz, who had just been appointed Apostolic Delegate in Mexico. The Rev. Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., assisted in the final steps.

As he knelt along with Bishop Diaz on the altar steps of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in thanksgiving for the event, Archbishop Ruiz took a document from his pocket and handed it to his companion. It was Bishop Diaz's appointment from the Holy See as the new Archbishop of Mexico City. Archbishop Diaz could only burst out impulsively with a favorite expression, which in Spanish sounds rather profane and ungrateful, but means, in our language, only "What a horror!"

He had, in fact, good reason to look with fear on his new appointment. The Catholics in Mexico who had risked their lives for the cause of liberty, and

especially those whose sons had died on the field of battle, looked with no favorable eye on the new settlement. Archbishop Diaz knew this as well as anyone else, and he knew that he would be blamed for its incompleteness and perhaps too great trust in the good will of the Mexican Government. As one who lived on close terms of intimacy with him for two years, I am confident that some day the true story will be told of his honesty and sincerity.

Everything, of course, was done under the direct instructions of the Holy See, which was in touch with the negotiators at every step. The final document was approved by the Vatican word for word, article by article. Neither the Holy See nor the Bishops had any illusions about the nature of the settlement, but to avoid a great evil (the continued closing of the churches and the absence of religious worship in Mexico since 1926) it was decided to effect a *modus vivendi* that surrendered no essential right of the Church, but that opened the churches and inaugurated an era of good will.

Here is the text of the "simultaneous declarations" issued on the occasion.

President Portes Gil said:

"I have had conversations with Archbishop Ruiz y Flores and Bishop Pascual Diaz. These conversations took place as the result of public statements made by Archbishop Ruiz on May 2 and a statement made by me on May 8.

"Archbishop Ruiz and Bishop Diaz informed me that the Mexican Bishops have felt that the Constitution and laws, particularly the provision which requires registration of ministers and the provision which grants separate States the right to determine the maximum number of ministers, threaten the identity of the Church, giving the State the control of its spiritual offices.

"They assure me that the Mexican Bishops are animated by sincere patriotism and that they desire to resume public worship if this can be done consistently with their loyalty to the Mexican Republic and their consciences.

"They stated that it could be done if the Church could enjoy the freedom within the law to live and to exercise its spiritual offices.

"I am glad to take advantage of this opportunity to declare publicly and very clearly that it is not the purpose of the Constitution, nor of the laws, nor of the Government of the Republic to destroy the identity of the Catholic Church or of any other, nor to interfere in any way with its spiritual functions.

"In accordance with the oath of office which I took when I assumed the Provisional Government of Mexico to observe and to cause to be observed the Constitution of the Republic and the laws derived therefrom, my purpose has been at all times to fulfill honestly that oath and see that the laws are applied without favor to any sect and without any bias whatever, my administration being disposed to hear from any person, be he dignitary of some church or

merely a private individual, any complaints in regard to injustices arising from undue application of the laws.

"With reference to certain provisions of the law which have been misunderstood, I also take advantage of this opportunity to declare:

"1. That the provision of the law which required the registration of ministers does not mean that the Government can register those who have not been named by a hierarchical superior of the religious creed in question or in accordance with its regulations;

"2. With regard to religious instruction, the Constitution and laws in force definitely prohibit it in primary or higher schools whether public or private, but this does not prevent ministers of any religion from imparting its doctrines within the church confines to adults and their children, who may attend for that purpose;

"3. That the Constitution as well as the laws of the country guarantee to all residents of the Republic the right of petition and therefore the members of any church may apply to the appropriate authorities for amendment, repeal or passage of any law."

In reply the Apostolic Delegate declared:

"Bishop Diaz and I have had several conferences with the President, the results of which are set forth in the statement which he has issued today.

"I am glad to say that all conversations have been marked by a spirit of mutual good-will and respect. As a consequence of the statement made by the President, the Mexican clergy will resume religious services pursuant to the laws in force.

"I entertain the hope that resumption of religious services may lead the Mexican people, animated by a spirit of mutual good-will, to cooperate in all moral efforts made for the benefit of all people of our fatherland."

Thus the Church was committed to a new adventure, that of trusting to the good will of the Government. With rejoicing and hope the churches were again open for public worship.

## CHAPTER IX

### MEDITATION AT TEPOZOTLÁN

LATE ONE Sunday afternoon in January, 1931, I stood on the arcaded balcony of the old Jesuit Novitiate at Tepozotlán in the State of Mexico and looked out over an enchanting valley, tree clad, mountain girt, domed with a tropical blue sky. It was a time and place for melancholy meditation on the mutations of human affairs.

The great volcanic hills all around, brown in the foreground, blue in the distance, were the only objects that had not changed. The hamlet near by was merely a rambling collection of half-ruined huts of adobe, though many of them were still inhabited by human beings, poorer than any human being has a right to be. The fields of a fertile valley showed little signs of cultivation. The roads, except for one concrete ribbon beyond, were but two ruts between weeds.

The Novitiate itself had long been empty since 1911, taken over by the Government and converted into a national monument because it contains some of the finest art work in Mexico, a land of surpassing masterpieces. It was built in 1584. Now its portals were guarded by three sleepy officials in blue uniforms, the initials of the National Department of Education on their coat lapels. Tourists and people on a holiday from Mexico City wandered listlessly around. What had been once a focus of intellectual and spiritual radiation was a dead and sterile monument of the past.

Now that a sort of religious peace had come to the Republic, it was inevitable that one should contemplate the results.

This Novitiate had not been lost in the very recent troubles, nor had many another great building which the tourist now sees and thinks ingenuously,



because he has been told it by a guide, is an achievement of the present or a past revolutionary government. But it, like the Augustinian Convent at Acolmán, the Franciscan Convents in Mexico City, Sacromonte, Huejotzingo, and dozens of other places, all of them glorious works of art in stone, canvas, or wood, are like ancient dams that are broken and useless, or put to uses that are far from their original destiny. Every State educational institution of any consequence and many a government building is merely a former Church college or school for boys or girls, or a former seminary for educating youths for the priesthood. I thought of some of them:

The National Library in Mexico City was formerly the church of St. Augustine;

The National Preparatory School was once the Jesuit College of St. Ildefonso;

The Medical School in Mexico City was the old Palace of the Inquisition;

Another great preparatory school in Mexico City, used also for the Summer School, was the Jesuit College of Mascarones, "House of the Masks," thus called after its carved baroque decorations;

The University of Guadalajara was the Jesuit College of San Juan;

The soldiers' barracks in Guadalajara was the once beautiful diocesan Seminary;

The Government Palace in Morelia was the first diocesan Seminary in that city;

The University of Morelia was the second diocesan Seminary (and I hear that the third diocesan Seminary of this unfortunate diocese, the See of Archbishop Ruiz, has also been taken in its unfinished condition for a Government building);

The Industrial School in Morelia, a Government institution, was once the Jesuit college;

The new sumptuous Government Palace in Morelia was the Teresian College for girls;

The public library of Morelia was once the Jesuit church;

The State College in Puebla was the Jesuit Holy Ghost College;

The Palace of Justice in Puebla was the diocesan Seminary of St. Pantaleon;

The Normal School of Puebla was the Jesuit College of the Sacred Heart;

The Federal Palace in Queretaro was the Convent of the Augustinian Fathers.

These are just a few, but perhaps among the largest, of the monuments which give rise to the bitter quip that the destiny of the Jesuits and other Religious Orders had been fulfilled: they had supplied the Government with all

the educational and governmental buildings it needed, without its spending a peso.

Yet they are mostly buildings that were taken before 1926, and many of them long before that, in 1857 or earlier. During the relative peace that grew up under Porfirio Diaz many Catholic bodies began to build again, since their older buildings had passed out of their hands. When 1926 rolled around, these in their turn went under the hand of the Government, and it was no part of the settlement of 1929 that any of them be restored; and none of them were. After the lost lives, the lost buildings were the greatest tragedy; neither of them were given back.

Yet no tourist in Mexico can fail to be impressed at the extraordinary profusion of architectural gems still scattered all over the country. Every village church in stone, and there are thousands of them, is worth looking at for some bit of carving, a portal, a reredos, or an altar. Most of them were built in that extraordinary burst of artistic activity that lay between, say 1550 and 1650, surely the greatest artistic century that any country ever produced. You have only to imagine what the country looked like in 1700, for instance, and feel the desolate poverty of civilization that prevailed in the English colonies as compared with New Spain. Up to 1821, no less than 11,818 Cathedrals, churches, and chapels were constructed, in stone, of course. What is more, these monuments are still there to prove it in imperishable stone that has resisted even the assaults of revolution. The native Indian artists who created much of this beauty still lie easy in their graves. Yet they created it for the Church, in love and admiration, and the Church no longer has their gifts in its hands.

So ran part of my meditations on the balcony at Tepozotlán.

But the glory that is still there, out of which the life has all but departed, made me think still further back: how all this began.

Education had followed quickly upon conquest. Fra Pedro de Gante, that great Franciscan, founded the first college in America in 1523 at Texcoco, near Mexico City. Later he founded a larger one in the capital itself, beside the church of San Francisco, which still exists though the school itself has disappeared. It educated 1,000 pupils at a time, and its curriculum included Latin, music, singing, religion, and "various mechanical and artistic processes." Its student body, of course, was largely Indian. The noble Indians had their own college, for higher studies, Santa Cruz at Tlatelolco, founded in 1536 by Bishop Zumárraga, and the mestizo boys had theirs, St. John Lateran, and the mestiza girls one, too, both founded by the great Zumárraga about 1547. When the Jesuits came in 1569, some twenty-nine years after their foundation, they began to cover the land with colleges, until in 1767 they had thirty-two altogether in Mexico.

The first university in America was founded, not at Cambridge in 1640, but

at Mexico City in 1553, which was eighty-seven years earlier. By 1775, its records show, 1,172 students had taken the doctorate there in all branches of letters and science. The modern university has fallen on sad days and its recent history will be narrated later.

By the side of colleges and universities, of course, went the printing press. It was set up in Mexico City by Zumárraga. From it came the first book printed in America, *La Doctrina cristiana*,<sup>1</sup> and 11,632 before 1800, 231 of these before 1599. Books came from Spain, of course, and so the first library in America was established by Fra Alonso de la Vera Cruz, in Mexico City, in 1551, at the Seminary of St. Paul. The first newspaper in America, *El Diario de los Sucesos Notables*, was published in Mexico in 1648.

Other universities, colleges, and libraries followed these, all over the country, in Guadalajara, Valladolid (now Morelia), Puebla of the Angels, and other capitals as they grew up, and of course there was an elementary school of more or less merit, according to the gifts of the missionary, by the side of each parish church.

These, too, were in my memory at Tepozotlán.

It is not surprising, therefore, that there had been so tremendous an outpouring of art during that Great Century, and after. And more often than not, the artist, the poet, the historian, even the preacher, came from the ranks of the Indians, from whom every once in a while there sprang a plant that grew and flowered and overshadowed all else. Spaniards were sitting under Indian professors in the Universities, and the "Raphael of Mexico," Miguel Cabrera, whose works are starred in the guide books today, was a Zapotec Indian, a pupil of the Jesuits in Oaxaca. Indians also were many other writers, builders, sculptors, and painters. The famous wealth of the Church was mostly created by itself and its Indian and Spanish helpers.

When one looks at it, it is quite wrong to think of Mexico before 1800 as a colony. When the Spaniards called it New Spain, they meant that Spain was reproduced in the New World, with all the culture and tradition that that implied. That is not a controversial point, but a fact that is still there. Even the Inquisition was there, as we are so often reminded, but the Inquisition in New Spain, unlike that in Old Spain, existed chiefly for the purpose of protecting the Indians against the rapacity and exploiting tendencies of the Spanish merchants. Polemic writers deny that, but historians have proved it.

Too little known, also, is the work of men like Bishop Vasco de Quiroga, who in the middle of the sixteenth century conceived the idea of having each Indian village specialize in its own handicraft, and formed a cooperative syndicate to market the results. The proceeds went into a common fund, as in the

famous Reductions of Paraguay. Thus one village made tiles, another textiles, another straw work, and the skills then taught the Indian have come down to the present day. The tourist buys the wares, and wonders at the art that is in these simple Indians, and thinks how great it is, and is never told that it was taught them by the Bishops and Missionaries and has come down from father to son to this day. The stupendous energy of these men is shown by the fact that the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinians constructed two hundred and eighty-one convents, some very large, from 1526 to 1567 alone, all of them centers of civilization.

So the centuries flew by and I was suddenly interrupted from my memories by the honk of an auto horn. It was time to return to Mexico City before it grew dark. There were only ghosts in the cells, and corridors, and chapels of the old Novitiate. . . .

I was back in the days of the Calles Revolution. I could not wear clerical clothes, I could not say Mass in public, I could not hear confessions, preach, teach or write. The "palace" of the Archbishop was a rented villa in a secluded quarter, and it was so small that I had to sleep in a room over the garage—a room that had no lock on its door and opened on a balcony whose steps led down to the street, and were guarded only by an enormous shaggy watch dog, much beloved by His Grace. The real palace of the Archbishop was a grandiose edifice adjoining the Cathedral; it was used by the Government for odds and ends, but the Archbishop was allowed a floor in it for the Chancery office.

By the Morrow settlement none of the articles of the Constitution on religion nor of the Calles decree-laws of 1926 had been derogated. Those referring to the registration of priests had been "interpreted" in a sense that could be accepted by the Church; that is, they were no longer a licensing provision by which the minister of religion received his mission to administer worship and the Sacraments from the State. It is true that none but those registered could practise, but all those registered would be only those appointed by the Bishop of the place. The distinction was important, especially in Latin minds. For them, Catholic or not, a formality has all the power and meaning of a fact, and it is not surprising to those who know those minds to see that it was accepted by all without hesitation. Before it was made, it was wrong for priests to exercise their sacred functions; after that, it was perfectly allowable.

The principle had been saved; what had become of the rest?

A clipping I have before me tells part of the story. It is taken from the *Excelsior* of Mexico City for May 5, 1928. Its heading is:

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-TWO CHURCH PROPERTIES HAVE ALREADY BEEN  
NATIONALIZED

The news story is a summary of a recent Government report. It throws a bright light on the claims that come from time to time from the Government about its school-building policies.

These 152 properties were all buildings and lands that formed part of local church plants. They were the elementary schools, the pastor's home, convents, and the like, all the supplementary edifices that one ordinarily sees around a church in any country. They had all been taken by the Government, and *Excelsior* remarks demurely that they represent "an economy for the Government of considerable proportions."

Their destination is given: forty for Federal schools and libraries; twenty-two for State schools and libraries; seventy to local governments for schools, centers of culture and recreation fields; seven for telegraph offices; eight for military offices; two for agricultural centers; one each for the Department of Commerce, for the Post Office, and Department of Health; eight others for various similar purposes.

That makes one hundred and thirty-eight, leaving fourteen unaccounted for. Which reminds me that on a former wholesale confiscation of Church properties under Comonfort in 1856 the total value of ecclesiastical properties—schools, Bishops' and priests' houses, colleges, hospitals, convents, and lands to support them, not counting the churches and Cathedrals—was officially appraised at 44,500,000 pesos. When all was rounded up, and what remained in the hands of the Government was again appraised, it was found that all had disappeared except some to the total value of 3,000,000 pesos. The rest had fallen into the hands of the "new rich" of the radical Revolution.<sup>2</sup>

As a matter of fact, the above 152 confiscated properties are only a very small part of what was taken from the Church during the years 1926 to 1929. The movement was only getting under way when this preliminary report was published. No later one has been made, so far as I know, and the Church has been too much occupied with other things to take an inventory of its material losses. The probability is, however, that the losses run into several hundreds, representing practically everything the Church had managed to amass for its welfare, educational, and religious operations since the last great sweep was made of what it had before 1856. A certain amount of it went for Government purposes, particularly schools in regions where tourists come, but Carleton Beals, no friend of the Church, is my authority for saying that a large part of it

simply went into the hands of politicians and Generals.<sup>3</sup>

Thus practically every piece of ecclesiastical property that could be discovered outside the churches themselves, already declared Government property by the Constitution and the Calles laws of July, 1926, had been taken away from the Church before the settlement of 1929.

Not a piece of it was returned by that settlement.

By 1931, however, with that recuperating power which over and over again, after confiscation, made it come back to open new schools and colleges (witness the three successive seminaries of Morelia), the Church went right on beginning all over again.

Ortiz Rubio was President and that scared statesman was of no mind to stir up trouble. There was a kind of sickly peace abroad in the land. Some of the Governors—Tejeda in Vera Cruz and Garrido in Tabasco—defied the agreement of the Federal Government, and no churches were opened in those States. There was nothing the Federal Government could do about it. In some States the Governor was "friendly"; that is, he overlooked various small infractions of the law, and here and there elementary schools were opened in pretty poor quarters, Catholic clubs were started again and met in the houses of those who were better off.

Some Governors were, in fact, better than others; thus in Aguascalientes the Governor even allowed the priests to wear the Roman collar on the streets, though that is the only case I know where so open a violation of the Federal law was permitted. He did not go so far as to allow the same privilege to the Sisters' habits, however. In a Catholic hospital where I stayed one night, the Sisters wore secular clothes, and while on duty the usual garb of a nurse.

The country presented an extraordinary picture of chaos and confusion. In Mexico City, a prominent priest, a noted pulpit orator and writer, conducted an elementary school practically in the backyard of several small one-story adjoining houses which he bought and put together. This gave him a playground for the children, who simply walked out of their ground-floor classrooms onto it. The teachers were Catholic ladies of the City, and one of his most prominent lay helpers was a nephew of President Ortiz Rubio! He was particularly useful in organizing an outdoor cinema; and I still have a lurid handbill for one of the performances, which included stage acts as well as a picture. Outside, the establishment, of course, still looked merely like a row of very poor houses. But it was typical of what was going on all over the Republic at that time of comparative peace.

In the State of Mexico one of the very old families had been able to keep its holdings together through thick and thin. They were very large; one whole

volcano was on the estate, up to the snow line of which the Calles Government built a very fine automobile road. There were also four or five villages, and in each one of them the lady of the estate maintained a public school, which was a Catholic school with crucifixes and pictures of Our Lord on the walls. When the inspector came, and inquired what these were doing there, the answer was given that the law said pictures of great philosophers, like Plato, Kant, etc., must be there, and was not Jesus Christ a great Philosopher? Alas, when he asked the children what songs they knew, expecting to hear about revolutionary anthems, he was told by them they knew the *Te Deum*, the *Miserere*, the *Magnificat*. But even that passed.

The bribery that made this possible was very simple. The Governor of the State was invited to the Hacienda every month for dinner. He, who had been a simple peasant, just couldn't forego the pleasure of dining with the quality.

And so it went. All over the Republic, depending on the good humor of the Governor or the Commandant of the Army area, tentative signs of life sprang up, a school here, a college there, a hospital there. In San Luis Potosi the Ladies of the Sacred Heart continued their college openly; the Jesuits had colleges in Puebla and Guadalajara and even in Mexico City—in rented buildings, for their old ones had all gone.

The Church had won the first bout of the fight—the attempt to destroy its very essence, by making it an appanage of the State, but it had lost nearly everything else.

## CHAPTER X

### POLITICAL INTERLUDE

THE ROAD that leads down to Puebla from Mexico City winds around the north shoulder of Iztlaccihuatl, the Sleeping Lady, and crosses the divide out of the Valley of Mexico at about 12,000 feet. Since the Valley itself lies at the height of about 8,000 feet, this is not in itself an extraordinary climb. But the road is a fine example of engineering, cement-paved, easily graded, and in two generous lanes.

It is well policed, by traffic policemen who travel in pairs for safety, and are slangily called by the Mexicans, *Mordelones*, "Biters." They are very efficient, even officious, as I could testify when the car I was riding in was stopped by them, at the dead of night, because our chauffeur did not dim his headlights when passing them. The Mexican system of giving you a summons is to take away your driving license, and give you a receipt in exchange. You can redeem the license when you appear before the magistrate the next day. (I understand, however, that in Mexico also you can still "get off" by judicious telephoning.)

I once asked a prominent Mexican to tell me who was responsible for that magnificent road, and also the one that leads out over Mount Ajusco down to Cuernavaca. He answered quizzically:

"Calles."

"But then Calles," I said, "must be a great man!"

"He is a great man," answered my friend. "If only he had not embarked on this miserable Church business, he would have gone down in Mexican history as one of our greatest. As it is, he will go down as a failure."

This was long before his recent political downfall.

Writers have long speculated on just what it was that made him such a



bitter, almost personal enemy of the Church. Nothing in his turbulent past, from his reputed illegitimate birth, through his years as school teacher, municipal treasurer, bar tender, and petty soldier in the Revolution, to his years as Colonel, General, and politician, has ever been brought forward, it seems to me, that accounts for the active immediate hatred he has preserved for the Church and its personnel. In his radical days he may have and probably did share the idea that the Church was a reactionary institution, as have so many of that state of mind. Mussolini, for instance, was possessed by it once. But Calles also has long since outgrown his radical ideas. He is now the wealthiest man in Mexico, with large shares in many kinds of semi-monopolies of business. Yet he still hates the Church, with the same bitter, personal hatred. We will just have to let it go at recording the fact—without being able yet to penetrate the mysterious reason.

From 1924 to 1934, Plutarco Elias Calles dominated the life of Mexico as thoroughly as any dictator in modern or ancient times dominated his own countrymen. He was President from 1924 to 1928, and when he left office in December of the latter year, he had organized his followers into a political party which was as totalitarian in its control over political life as is the Fascist party in Italy, the National Socialist in Germany, or the Communist in Russia. Before that there had been merely a heterogeneous mass of parties, each one vying with the other to get to the Left of it. Calles brought them all together into one party owing undivided allegiance to himself, and allowing no other party to exist, except around election time for purposes of having an election.

This party, the National Revolutionary party, was based on the twin pillars of organized labor in the cities and agrarianism in the country. It was devoted in program to fulfilling the aims of "The Revolution," which means the Revolution under Carranza against Huerta. For campaign purposes this Revolution claims to be the legitimate successor of Madero's revolt against Diaz. It is, but only in the same way that Lenin was the successor of Kerensky or Robespierre of Mirabeau.

This Revolution had been achieved by hard fighting in the field and the indefatigable efforts of Woodrow Wilson's personal envoy, John Lind, as has at last been revealed in his recent biography.<sup>1</sup> At the moment of its victory, it called a Constitutional Convention to meet at Querétaro in December, 1916. Only those who had taken an actual part in the Carranza Revolution were allowed to be delegates to this Convention. Carranza, as Provisional President, gave it the Constitution of 1857 to revise; but with small exceptions the result was an entirely new document.

Article 3, for example, is on education. In the 1857 Constitution it reads that "Education is free." The same article in the 1917 Constitution runs this way:

"Education is free, but (*pero*) that given in public schools shall be 'lay' and

also that in the primary, secondary and higher education in private schools. No religious corporation and no minister of any cult shall establish or direct schools of primary education. Private primary schools may be erected only under official supervision. Primary instruction in public schools shall be gratuitous. . . . The law does not permit the establishment of monastic orders, whatever be the denomination or object for which they pretend to be erected."

Those *peros*, which frequently follow a declaration of freedom in the Constitution, cause a great deal of merriment to Mexicans, especially, Mexican fashion, to those who have suffered most grievously from them.

Thus in the matter of education the Government had all the authority it might wish, to give it complete control of all primary schools. The fact that up to very recent days it did not choose to exercise it was simply due to the fact that by closing the Sisters' schools the country would be left almost without teachers.

The real innovations of the 1917 Constitution, however, revolve around four points: the religious provisions, land reform, labor legislation, and national control of natural wealth. It is not a Constitution in our American sense, a grant of specified powers to a Federal Government, though Mexico is also a Federal Republic, but a code of definite and detailed legislation, lacking in most cases only the attached penalties to make it the Code of Statutes for the country. It was drawn up by several powerful intellectuals, with the help of some Americans who had evolved out of the LaFollette and Bull Moose movements in the United States. Lincoln Steffens revealed in his autobiography that he was one of these, and it is alleged, I know not on what authority, that a certain Bronstein, later Leon Trotsky, was another, and that he had the document in his baggage when he sailed from Halifax not long after.

The labor provisions of the Constitution, Article 123 (often called the Labor Charter), are merely the advanced labor thought of the radicals of that time: minimum wages, maximum hours, Government control of conditions in which labor works, etc. The only really Socialistic (or Fascist) provisions among these were compulsory State arbitration of labor disputes and the setting up of Councils of Conciliation and Arbitration. It resulted in a powerful instrument of industrial control in the hands of later Presidents.

The agrarian laws were somewhat the same, on paper. All social thinkers in Mexico, Catholic as well as others, have agreed that the concentration in a few hands of a large part of the arable lands of the country was an unmitigated evil. Before the time of Diaz, who, be it remembered, began his Presidency as a radical follower of the radical Juarez, many lands had been held in common by Indian villages since long before the time of the conquest. Diaz abolished most of these holdings, called *ejidos*. It is also sometimes forgotten by some radical

writers that there would have been no *ejidos* for Diaz to expropriate if the Indians had not been confirmed in the possession of them by the Catholic Archbishops and missionaries, who waged an unrelenting fight against Spain to preserve the natives in these common village properties, as did the missionaries in the Reductions of Paraguay and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

The result of abolishing the *ejidos* was to reduce the Indian who lived on the land to the status of a peon, a worker who had no liberty of working contract. He had to labor for the owner of the land, or migrate to some other place, where the chances were that he would incur the same plight. One of the aims of the Revolution was to abolish this system by expropriating the lands, and give in return agrarian bonds to the value of the official appraisal.

For this purpose a regular agrarian army was formed by Obregon, who armed the farmers as a guerrilla force for the protection of Government agents, who more often than not used them in violent forays against the large haciendas. They were also useful around election time.

Just as the Right mostly agrees with the Left that the need of redistribution of lands—the *latifundia*—was great, so the Left now agrees with the Right that the method of redistributing them could not have been worse. The payment for them was practically confiscation, for the bonds quickly had no value whatever, and some fervent Revolutionaries later made a good thing out of them by buying them up from the hard-pressed holders and redeeming them at face value from the Government. Then, in the first flush of revolutionary fervor the lands were often divided in such a way that some of them had the sources of water, and some had none at all. The peons had no agricultural education, and often contented themselves with gathering the crops that lay on the land at the time and were unable to plant any others, due to lack of seed or knowledge.

This is the burden of the criticisms that were made by Calles himself in his farewell speech in December, 1928, by Luis Cabrera, one of the original Carranza intellectuals, in his famous lecture in 1931, "The Balance Sheet of the Revolution," by Carleton Beals, Ernest Gruening, and by Frank Tannenbaum, who wrote a book about it. Later writers have remarked that the problem had not been settled at all, and that the same old large individual holdings are just as great as ever, only the owners are not the old revolutionaries who accepted them from Porfirio Diaz, but the new Revolutionaries who got them from recent Governments.

The Labor movement had another fate. Under Obregon and Calles, it fused around the *Confederacion Regional Obrera Mexicana* (CROM) under Luis Morones, and it was affiliated with the American Federation of Labor through the interest of Samuel Gompers. Calles did the extraordinary thing of putting the

head of the Labor Confederation in his Cabinet as Minister of Labor, a place which he created for him.

Morones was a typical revolutionary. One who formerly was his secretary once told me with prideful admiration: "He is a marvelous man, lordly, princely! Why, I have seen him receive an enemy in his office, talk with him calmly and politely, and then, when the man turned to leave, whip out his revolver and shoot him dead, and go on with his work at his desk as if nothing had happened."

The CROM was the backbone of the Calles administration, as the agrarians had been that of Obregon's. It had powerful backing. Samuel Gompers tells us in his autobiography<sup>3</sup> that it was "valuable information" received "under the protection of fraternal Masonic relationship," which he turned over to President Wilson, that caused the rejection of Huerta and the recognition of Carranza. It cooperated wholeheartedly with the drive against the Church, which caused much commotion in the American Federation of Labor conventions of 1927 and 1928.

The right hand of President Calles was Adelberto Tejeda, who was Minister of *Gobernacion*, ranking office in the Cabinet, and a sort of Home Office. This man rarely did anything except violently, though another side of his character was shown to an American who did much business in Mexico. One of his affairs involved going out of the city with the Minister a considerable distance to see a certain property. They had gone together only a few miles when they came upon one of those wandering minstrel troupes one often sees down there. Mr. Tejeda stopped the car, and ordered them to perform for him, while he and his guest sat by the roadside. When they had finished, he ordered them to do it again. The two ate their beer and sandwiches, and Mr. Tejeda ordered another performance. When he finally had enough, he threw the performers a handful of money, and as it was now too late to see the property he and the American had to come home again, and see the place another time.

This capricious individual, whom Calles ruled fairly well, will appear in this story again.

When Calles' four-year term came to an end, there was much speculation about his running again. One of the slogans of the Revolution, however, was "Honest Suffrage. No re-election." Now the new candidate was General Obregon.

But he had already been President and it was against the Constitution for him to hold the office a second time. So the Constitution was changed to mean that no one could be President twice in succession. This gave rise to the quip of some Mexican wag, who wrote it on a city wall: "Honest Suffrage? No. Re-election."

Now Obregon had already been in touch with certain Catholic parties with a view to mitigating the religious conflict, and he had been found very favorable to a change. This became known to the Church's enemies, and as I have said, his life was secretly threatened. Moreover, the forged interview with Archbishop Ruiz in Paris in May, 1928, to the effect that he would find Obregon much more friendly to the Church (it was well known that his wife was a fervent Catholic), added to the indignation against him. It is not surprising, as I have said above, that even in our own Government it was known that he would be killed. It was an ironical circumstance that his presence in Mexico City that day, which he had reluctantly conceded, was due to Ambassador Morrow, with whom that very afternoon he had an appointment to discuss the religious question.

There is no provision in the Revolutionary Constitution for a Vice President, the Founding Fathers prudently deciding that they would not trust themselves, or one another, with such a position, which might prove too much of a temptation. So the Congress chose a Provisional President, Emilio Portes Gil, who was to serve until a regularly elected President was named to fill out the unexpired term of General Obregon, lengthened by a smooth change of the Constitution into six years instead of four.

To Portes Gil, much credit is given by Ernest Gruening, whose estimates of Mexican public character are often keen and outspoken, for having successfully worked out an agrarian program in the State of Tamaulipas, of which he was Governor. Later, however, Dr. Gruening thus gives his estimate of him as Governor:

". . . Emilio Portes Gil is above the average. He has done something for education, and the application of the agrarian program in his State has been orderly and constructive. Nevertheless, *his administration leaves not a little to be desired in financial scrupulousness.*"<sup>4</sup>

It was Portes Gil who signed the religious settlement with Archbishop Ruiz. Beside the written terms of the agreement, he also gave certain verbal ones which confirmed the others, and even went beyond them. He pointed out that though it was forbidden to give religious instruction off church property, it was all right to conduct schools in the church yard, where they could easily be built. He further undertook to instruct the State Governors that they were to wink at other such roundabout ways of circumventing the intentions of the law.

This frank reference to Presidential interferences with the functions of State Governors, who are elected by the people of their State, should not surprise anyone. The biographer of Dwight Morrow, in relating how Calles settled the oil question for him—by a few curt orders to the Congress and the Supreme Court—relates that "he was a little shocked by the summary manner in which Calles

had treated his Legislature and his Judiciary." He assures us, however, that Mr. Morrow's attitude was "as usual realistic."<sup>5</sup> An American friend of mine was once in the office of a Secretary to Obregon, asking for some favor which the courts denied him. The Secretary called up a Judge of the Supreme Court to tell him he should grant what was asked, and when the Judge apparently demurred, the Secretary merely said:

"Very well, your successor will be around in half an hour."

And he was.

As the sequel will show, Portes Gil evidently signed his name to the Church agreements with his tongue in his cheek. He certainly did not show the trump which the National Revolutionary party was to play before not many months were out. And in any case he did not remain in office long enough to fulfill any pledges, which, besides, were already being broken before he retired.

A regular election was held in July, 1929, and in December Pascual Ortiz Rubio took office to fill out the term of Obregon. He was a surprise, and it was felt by some aggrieved politicians that Calles had pulled him out of a hat. As a matter of fact, he had taken him from the diplomatic service where many honorable gentlemen have served Mexico, rather than take part in the doings at home. Unfortunately, these doings sometimes cause mutterings abroad, and the diplomats are in the unenviable position of having to defend them.

On the day President Ortiz Rubio was inaugurated and was coming out of the National Palace, someone took a shot at him, and the bullet cut off the tip of his nose, and his niece was wounded. It was told me by one who knew him well that from that moment his enthusiasm for being President completely evaporated. I was not surprised.

He certainly had no great enthusiasm for prosecuting the war against the Church. He was an easy-going man, fond of good living; he was no match for the wild men in the party, Tejeda, Osornio, and Garrido. To his timid admonitions to these worthies to stop the persecution of the Church, they simply drew their own private armies around themselves and dared the President to send the Federal army to make them stop.

Even his Minister of War, General Joaquin Amaro, paid no attention to him. There was no particular reason why he should, for, as is well known, in Mexico he who controls the army controls the country, and the Minister of War is that man. The Minister of War, therefore, was always the personal appointee of the dictator Calles. Amaro had been once a hostler in a hacienda in Durango. He later spent much time educating himself, and in particular studying large photographs of the artistic treasures of Europe. For this and other things, it is within my knowledge that the United States Government once looked on him as

the next candidate for President. During his term at the head of the army, he started the publication of a very scurrilous sheet called *La Patria*, for circulation among the soldiers. It contained the most ribald blasphemies and insults against God and the Church.

His time came quickly, though. Two of the Generals prominent in putting down the Escobar or Obregonista rebellion in 1929 were Juan Andreu Almazan and Saturnino Cedillo, whom we will meet again. These men were moderates and little by little grew more and more estranged from Calles. They entered into a conspiracy with the President, and probably with Amaro, who had grown closer to Ortiz Rubio, to effect a sort of coup d'état which should simply consist of announcing that Calles was no longer dictator. With the army in hand, nothing further need be done, and Calles would no doubt leave the country. The maneuver was effective but premature; it worked later under Cárdenas. To effect their purpose, they considered it necessary to bring Portes Gil into the conspiracy, since he had returned to Mexico City from abroad and had become Grand Master of the Masonic Grand Orient. Portes Gil, however, immediately told General Calles, and one morning Federal troops surrounded the Palace of Chapultepec and it was given out that Ortiz Rubio had resigned to go abroad for his health. The Government had shown its appreciation of his services by allowing him a guard of honor to the American border.

His successor was General Abelardo Rodriguez. The great selling point about Ortiz Rubio had always been that he was a civilian. Mexico was at last on a stable footing. He was, however, an outsider, after all. So they went back to military circles for a President. General Rodriguez had been Governor of Lower California, and a sharer in the Mexican-American syndicate which conducted the gambling houses at Tia Juana and Agua Caliente. He had grown rich from this and the other enterprises that sometimes go along with that world. One of the first things he did was to open a sumptuous gambling casino near Mexico City, the Foreign Club, which, according to the indignant words of Carleton Beals, was "corrupting" all Mexico City.

But this chapter is already long enough. It was necessary, however, to show what type of man the Church was dealing with during these middle years of its troubles. We will meet more politicians as we go along.

## CHAPTER XI

### PICKING UP THE THREADS

IN A CERTAIN ATTIC in Mexico City there is, or was once, a small printing press. It was old-fashioned, it needed repairs, but it worked; it was tended by two men, one young, ardent-eyed, well-dressed, obviously an intellectual, the other a horny-handed workman. There was a meeting room holding about fifty on the same floor near it, and a small library.

This was the central headquarters of the Catholic labor movement in Mexico.

Now the official Mexican labor movement is perhaps the most publicized feature of the Revolution. Its affiliation with the American Federation of Labor, its achievements in the Carranza movement dating from the Casa del Obrero Mundial and the brothers Magon, offshoots of the I. W. W. in the United States, the favor it enjoyed from the dictator Calles, all gave it a preponderating influence in public affairs. No politician dared to offend it, and it is generally true that it was at one time the very heart of the Mexican Revolution. It threw itself wholly into the war against religion. It was supreme, though its leader, Morones, was at the time in eclipse, following the murder of Obregon.

Yet this little Catholic labor movement was neither pathetic nor comic. It struck me at the time as rather sublime. It strikes me now as the symbol of what the Church was like after the religious settlement. The idea of a Catholic labor movement had absolutely everything against it; there was no money; there was no great public figure on its side; it had no following to speak of, so far as I was able to judge. The closed shop is so absolute in Mexico that a workman owes his employment to his union, not to his employer; and labor's political power was so



great that no open follower of the Church might hope to join a union.

This Catholic movement started out bravely—against all possible odds. In its perfect hope and courage it was enough to move anyone to tears. The Papal Encyclicals urged Christian labor unions to all Catholics. Very well, Mexico should have them, too, especially since the workers had been made the spear point of social revolution.

During those times everything in Mexico was like that. The Bishops were everywhere calling on their flocks to take up the threads where they had been broken—they had been broken so often—and weave a new pattern into the life of Mexico, as if nothing stood in the way.

Without any college buildings at all, Catholics started in again to have colleges. It is true that the Salesian college in Guadalajara was and had been all through the persecution running full blast, doing a magnificent job. But that was because Mussolini had uttered ferocious threats against Calles if he closed it—and it remained open. To clinch the situation the priest at the head of it was made by the Italian dictator his consul in the city. The "French college" in Mexico City, San Borja, under the Christian Brothers, had also remained open all through the trouble, because a "lay" French Government had demanded it. But apart from those two everything had to begin all over again.

In Guadalajara the former Jesuit College of San José was now a Government lyceum—a fine, large, modern building, built in Porfirio Diaz' time, and no doubt many a guide has told credulous American tourists that it shows what the Government is doing for education. I was listened to with a sort of amused alarm by my hosts when I recounted a visit to it during a stroll one afternoon, and defended myself on the ground that I had a perfect right to enter family property.

The present Jesuit college was a rented house on the outskirts of the city. It was a fine house for a residence, with an expansive garden, with a full faculty of degreed Religious professors, who looked like more or less fashionable laymen. They ran it in an openly clandestine fashion, under the nominal direction of a layman.

In Puebla the older and the newer Jesuit colleges were gone likewise; the newest was also running with a full faculty, dressed like laymen, and also under the nominal headship of a real layman. I learned that the Marist Brothers had also opened up again somewhere in Yucatan, as they also had in Mexico City. I have already mentioned the college in Monterey, conducted by the Ladies of the Sacred Heart.

The tragedy of the colleges was that they had no credentials, no academic rating. The loyal students who attended them ran the risk of not being able to

enter any university or professional school after all their years of study. There was absolutely no recognition by the State for them. All the students could do was to present themselves to the examining boards and take their chance.

One case of this kind is especially interesting. There was in a certain city a small Catholic college for girls, with a full curriculum. I can testify that they did hard work, for I visited their classes, examined their records, and even made a speech in French to the French class. One of these students presented herself for the State examination and came out with the highest rating on the list. Naturally, the examiners were curious to know where such a brilliant student had prepared; in fact, they were insistent on knowing. The poor girl could not tell, proud as she was of her institution, for the very existence of her Alma Mater was unknown to the Government, and if it had it would certainly have been suppressed. That is why I cannot tell its name here, much as I would like to blazon it forth.

Thus in 1931 Catholics were beginning all over again where they had started in 1530, and again in 1856, and again in 1920. Sisyphus would be able to sympathize with them. The only difference was that they were not building anew, as they had before, for that at last was forbidden them. They were carrying on in rented buildings, supplied by owners who took a chance, out of zeal or desire for a tenant, on their property being confiscated because of the use to which it was being put. This actually happened later on. Even the Archbishop of Mexico has had to move three times since 1929, out of consideration for his successive landlords, for fear the property would be taken.

Of course, the religious instruction of the young had to be undertaken quickly and extensively. Almost four years had gone by since anything of the kind could be undertaken publicly, and children of ten were without any systematic instruction in their religion. The churches, at that time, were still allowed to be used for Catechism.

One afternoon, in Guadalajara, during a solitary stroll, I became conscious that the streets were filled with children coming from all directions. I moved to their focal point, and discovered it was the parish church of the district. I followed them in, and found it crowded with boys and girls of school age. Every few pews, an older boy or girl stood and faced the pupils. They were the catechists, high-school and college students of the parish.

Presently, a young priest went to the pulpit and the classes began with the usual prayers said in unison by all the children under his leading. Then the hum of treble voices reciting their lessons. . . . I had a feeling of nostalgia.

It seems this was going on all over the Republic, wherever the Governor was willing to wink at it. In Guanajuato City, for instance, eight hundred went to Catechism twice a week. And indeed, at that time, it was against no Federal law,

though some States were beginning to pass laws forbidding it. During the last six months of 1931 an intensive national campaign of Catechism was undertaken in preparation for the quadricentennial of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Two subjects were assigned: the Divinity of Christ and the Divinity of the Church. Catechism classes, sermons, lectures for the advanced, leaflets, and study clubs were utilized to make the campaign truly national and inclusive. The success was astounding, and it later developed into a regularly assigned course followed throughout the year, wherever local conditions, gradually growing worse, allowed.

The heart of all this lay work was Catholic Action.

Immediately after they returned to Mexico, the Bishops, under the strong impulsion of the Pope, decided to organize the whole country in Catholic Action. Since nothing of the kind had been attempted before, it was naturally decided also to take the Italian model for Mexico.

I have the *Estatuto of Acción Católica Mexicana* before me. The unit of organization is the parish. In each parish there are four groups: men, women, young men, young women. Each of these groups has its separate officers, who are, of course, lay people. There is also a parish executive committee on which is represented each of the four groups. A priest is named as clerical Assistant for the executive committee, and he is the channel to the groups for the mandates which reach the members from time to time from the local Bishop or the whole Hierarchy.

The parish groups in turn are united in a diocesan group, with its own officers and clerical Assistant, and all the diocesan groups in a national group, presided over by the national president of Mexican Catholic Action. There is also a national clerical Assistant appointed by the Hierarchy. Other societies engaged in general interests are incorporated as cooperating organizations in Catholic Action.

Thus the Church started in to forge a compact group, which should ultimately comprise within its boundaries the whole of the Mexican Church. It was not meant for some only, for Pius XI had said in his Encyclical "Ubi Arcano" that "Catholic Action should be considered for all the Faithful a duty of the Christian life." It would be the Catholic Church itself, in its lay members, living the whole operative Catholic life.

What was the purpose of this great national society called "Catholic Action"?

The Bishops were careful to point out that there are four kinds of action that can be considered: political action, civic action, spiritual action, and Catholic action. They eliminated political action immediately; that is, that by which

citizens band themselves to elect candidates in local or national elections, or to secure the passage of certain neutral bills. This they left to the conscience of the individual, for they had no intention of forming a Catholic party. Civic action they likewise ruled out as not coming within their jurisdiction; this was also in the line of the citizen's private duty: supervision over the proper conduct of municipal and State affairs, political morality, health, welfare and educational policies, and other matters commonly administered now by the various governments or private societies organized for this purpose.

Spiritual action they defined as that proper to the Bishops and priests: administering the Sacraments and the Liturgy, preaching, teaching, and the handling of the sacred goods and property set aside for the use of the Church. This also obviously did not pertain to Catholic laymen.

What then was Catholic Action? It was primarily the sanctification of the individual, and his instruction in the Catholic Faith as a way of life. It was then the sanctification and instruction of the neighbor, and ultimately the permeation of all society by the Christian ideal. Many forms of activity come within its scope: personal contact, group influence, publicity of various kinds, in sum, the "cooperation of the laity in the apostolate of the Hierarchy."

In June, 1929, the work was already set on foot in Mexico and proceeded with feverish haste. So many priests had died of hardships, or had been killed or exiled, so many had died naturally and not been replaced by others, since all seminaries had been closed, that there was more need than ever of bringing the laity into the work of re-Christianizing a nation that had been ploughed and furrowed by many revolutions and planted with so much hatred and anti-Christian agitation. The pressing need was for the Christian education of the people. Without that, no other religious activity would avail.

So the work was started all over. To multiply as quickly as possible the number of lay collaborators was the immediate objective. Whole Catholic Action would come later. An élite was what was needed right now. So they started in to find and form lay leaders. Groups of priests were brought to Mexico City and put through an intensive course of training. These in turn went back to their dioceses and gave the same kind of intensive course to the men, women, youths, and girls whom they found most immediately ready for the lesson. National and diocesan schools were set on foot for a more longterm education of leaders, especially among young ladies who were unemployed. All this was backed up by parish, diocesan, and national conventions, in which the enthusiasm of the workers was aroused and lifted to fighting pitch.

The success was extraordinary. During one month in 1933 more than 1,500 parochial conventions were held. By October of that year Catholic Action was

regularly organized in more than 400 parishes, in 29 dioceses, with more than 100,000 members regularly enrolled. All of this in the face of incredible obstacles of every kind, including the occasional disappearance in prison of the priest in charge, the raiding of private families in whose homes meetings were being held, and the taking away of the meeting place itself right from under their feet. The *Modus Vivendi* with the Government was still in force, but the Church had to watch its step. It had to be ready at any moment to fade into the Catacombs until the storm blew by.

Yet the program was just as ambitious as if the Church enjoyed the fullest freedom. In fact, that was the slogan: act *as if* there were no restricting laws in force. So there were set on foot study clubs, bulletins of various groups, a Catholic Truth Society, organized Catechetical teams of teachers, religious prize contests, advanced religious courses for intellectuals. The workers made annual closed spiritual retreats, and met for a monthly spiritual recollection. From 1932 through 1934, regular religious instruction was imparted by catechists of Catholic Action to an average of 300,000 children. To supplement the spiritual work night schools and Sunday lectures were started. Mission groups were founded, to collect money to be sent to foreign missionaries!

In full blast, wherever and whenever possible, the whole Christianizing and civilizing work of the Church was initiated. It was all in small quantity as yet; but the hope of growth was just as audacious and brave as the little group of Catholic labor unionists of whom I have spoken. A long, long future was envisaged. But it was recognized that anything that has grown was small when it began.

Side by side with this went another work, just as important, if not more so. It was the deliberate setting out to capture the intellectuals. The older ones, who had been educated under Diaz, were mostly infected with the Comtist positivistic philosophy which that doughty old warrior had seen fit to import from France into Mexico. It was not hostile to religion; it was just indifferent. Its disciples usually looked on the religious policy of the Government with ill-concealed contempt; but not being able to do anything about it, they kept to their books and lecture halls and let the world go by. It was a mistake, as they later found out under Cárdenas. But that is how they felt. Few of them went into politics, and when they did, burnt their fingers. They did not know the game.

The younger intellectuals, in the universities, were just as contemptuous of the Government, as we shall see, but they were young, and felt that something ought to be done about it. The doctrines of the Catholic intellectual revival in France became just as alluring to them as to their brethren on the Continent of Europe. They were open to that radicalism which is based on reason and human

nature as well as Christian Revelation.

Catholic clubs were started in all the universities: Mexico City, Guadalajara, Morelia, Toluca, Guanajuato. These clubs were places of study, of recreation, and the interminable discussions of youth. Their expressed ideal was to outstrip in scholastic records all other groups. Libraries were started; study seminars were voluntarily entered; special lectures arranged; athletics encouraged. I stepped into one of these clubs once just as a group of students was setting out for an all-night hike to the top of "Popo"—Popocatepetl, 17,794 feet high, to be on the summit in time to say their morning prayers at sunrise. The glow of the rising sun was in the eyes of each of them as I was introduced to them, and I felt that in some ways this was the most important work for religion being attempted in Mexico. As auxiliaries to these, "vanguard" clubs were being started among high-school boys, to serve as successors of these valiant climbers and their fellows.

The university clubs were incorporated into the National Federation of the Catholic Students of Mexico. True to the slogan of the rest of the Church, to carry on just as if the Church enjoyed the fullest freedom, they called to Mexico City an Ibero-American Convention of Catholic students from all Latin America for December, 1931, to coincide with the fateful celebration of the fourth Guadalupe centenary.

I have the *Convocatoria* of the convention before me. It is a magnificent document of faith and idealism, and is boldly signed by the President and Secretary. "The inquietude of the present generation . . . a profound philosophical disorientation . . . the disillusionment of our times . . . the crisis of character . . . contradictory, sterile and impractical causes . . . the urgencies of our environment," these are what preoccupy these students, and they are set against '*la gran fuerza Católica*—the great force of Catholicism . . . a better economic and political preparation . . . more intimate contact with our own realities . . . international friendship and solidarity . . . spiritual regeneration . . . problems to be solved by intellects that are cultivated and men who are pure." The invitation ends with the slogan "*Ad Lucem per Crucem*—To the Light through the Cross."

Latin American students apparently thought there was something appealingly gallant about Mexico inviting Catholics to a Congress under the nose of the Government, for it was a great success. The next Congress was held in Rome, and the others will rotate through the South American countries. An Ibero-American Federation of Catholic Students was formed, and it was, of course, affiliated with *Pax Romana*, the international society of Catholic students.

It is often from the top that civilizations are regenerated, and Mexico will be saved by men who have been taught to think and are yet not afraid to act. It is curious that in Mexico the Church should have found that out before the State; it is usually the other way around, and the Catholic answer comes late. But then Mexico had the example of France and other countries before it, and besides, the urgency was great. This much, at least, is certain, the educated of the next generation in Mexico will have among them men of high moral worth, great intellectual capacity, free from any paralyzing sterility of action and fear. We will see the proof of that later on in this book. Their crisis came upon them sooner than they expected.

It was all really an amazing spectacle. Any foreigner might have thought that the Church in Mexico would be content to lick its wounds for a while, retire to the sacristy and go out on the altar, but stop there with Mass when it could, and private ministrations when it could not. Here it was, blithely almost, stepping out just as if nothing had ever happened, as if it were existing in the freest country in the world.

Was it wise? Was it prudent for the Church thus to flaunt itself, as many thought of it, in the face of a sullen Government and an actively hostile political party, just after it had won a grudging license to exist? Wise or not, prudent or not, that did not matter. There was an inner compulsion that drove it on. It must do all this, or it would condemn itself to the very sterility in which its enemies had sought to confine it. The future must take care of itself, and the future, if it had only known, was black indeed.

## CHAPTER XII

### SPLENDOR BEFORE THE STORM

IN DECEMBER, 1931, the new resurgence of the Church reached its high mark. That month marked the fourth centenary of the appearance of the Blessed Virgin to the Indian boy, Juan Diego, on the hill of Tepeyac, outside of Mexico City.

Now the Virgin of Guadalupe is the symbol of what can only be called the Catholic citizenship of Mexico. She has much more than a religious meaning, and much more than a merely national meaning. She represents that intermingling of the Catholic religion and the race which constitutes the Mexican people itself. To most Mexicans today the division of one's own soul into two separate parts, one purely secular and the other purely religious, is incomprehensible. They are one and inseparable; the essence of traditional Mexicanism. And to keep those two parts distinct, so that in certain functions of life we act according to one and in certain others according to the other would be considered by the Mexican to be impossible. Only those who have lived where the Protestant Reformation has ever held sway would understand what is meant by it.

The one who would deny the possibility of this internal separation in Mexico most emphatically is Calles himself. "Separation of Church and State" was only a slogan, good enough for export, as a cant phrase which seems to mean something but in actuality means nothing. The whole issue in Mexico was never separation of Church and State; that had been achieved a century or more ago. What was aimed at, and is still aimed at, is the separation in the soul of the Mexican himself. Little by little it came to be understood by the rulers of Mexico that this separation could be undertaken only by the destruction of one or the



other and they were determined that it would be religion. Naturally, in this frame of mind they came to think, or at least to say, that the Church therefore aimed at the destruction of the State, or rather of Mexican nationality itself. So the struggle is one of life or death, in their minds.

All through the years from 1929 to 1931, the Church had been coming out of the Catacombs. Ortiz Rubio was President and he made few attempts to enforce the anti-religious laws which were still on the books. Moreover, the Church's personal relations with Government officials were quite friendly. The Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Ruiz, had been invited to speak on the radio and he had done so several times, limiting his talks to building up the spirit of comity which was daily growing. Both he and the Archbishop of Mexico, Archbishop Diaz, dined openly with the American Ambassador, J. Reuben Clark, who had succeeded Mr. Morrow in 1930. My own entry into Mexico that year was due to a personal intervention of the Delegate with the Minister of *Gobernacion*, Señor Riva Palacio. I had written some bitter things about the Mexican regime, and that was quite well known. It made no difference; the permission was granted immediately.

(I might explain in passing why special permission was needed at all. There was still on the books, and in the rules of the railroads and of the immigration service, the provision that though entry into Mexico did not require a passport, but only a tourist card, yet the following categories were excluded from this permission: Negroes, persons with malignant diseases, priests, Communists, Chinese, and several others. . . . That is why my own permission was doubly significant. I had refused to go in any other way than openly as a priest, and the fact of my profession was explicitly marked on my card.)

It looked, therefore, as if the reign of peace was a reality, and would require only careful handling on both sides to make it permanent. Writing in July, 1929, one who had been very close to all the negotiations leading up to the settlement, William F. Montavon, wrote:

"There are evidences which justify the hope that the reconciliation rests upon a foundation more secure and more lasting than either political security, or expediency. . . . Doubtless, if the new spirit of mutual good will is maintained, the constitutional provisions against religious instruction can be modified. . . . The concessions already made are important not so much for the liberties granted as for the spirit in which they are made."<sup>1</sup>

These words express the thought that was in the minds of everyone, even perhaps of many in high Government positions. That is why, as the year 1931 drew on, it came to the minds of everybody that December of that year was the fourth centenary of the miracle of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It should be

celebrated as a national festival, just as it had been in 1831, 1731, 1631. With no forebodings of trouble, plans were set on foot to make the celebration rival those which had preceded, and it was considered providential that it happened that there was religious peace just in time for the celebration.

Guadalupe, then, was to resume its place in the hearts of Mexicans, and was to be the sign and seal of religious peace. It had escaped almost by a miracle from an attempt to bomb it in 1927. Much destruction was wrought in the basilica, but the effect which made a tremendous impression on Mexicans was that the little silk curtain which is rolled up above the picture of the Madonna rolled gently down before it, as if, Mexicans said, to shield Our Lady from the sight of the havoc in the church. At another time, a large candle was brought by someone to be burned before the shrine, but each time the sacristan lighted it, it went out, and when it was examined, it was found to contain a bomb. Things like this were merely incentives to Mexicans to guard the shrine more closely.

It was in this shrine that all the religious and national aspirations of four centuries had concentrated since the Indian Juan Diego had shyly greeted Our Lady on this very hill. There is no accounting for Mexico, Mexicans will tell you, unless you have understood Guadalupe and what it means to Mexico, and they take you there the first thing within an hour of your arrival in the city, and it is the last place you visit as you leave.

That is why I present this short document, which is a contemporary account of what happened that December four hundred years ago. It was written in the Náhuatl language by Don Antonio Victoriano, who was himself an Indian, and was fifteen years old when the events he narrates took place. Nearly all of the actors in it were living when he wrote. He entered the Indian College of Tlatelalco in 1533, two years after the apparitions, and became a very learned man, one of the most distinguished professors in that famous college. This translation is made from the Spanish version. The original document is still extant, and was written some time between 1555 and 1560. It is very charming piece of color, and more than anything else gives us an understanding of that event that makes every Catholic Mexican's eyes mist over when he reads it.

"At the hour of dawn, on Saturday the 9th of December of the year 1531, an Indian of the village of Cuatitlán, called Juan Diego, passed close to the hill of Tepeyac and he heard, gently coming to him from the top of the hill, the wonderfully sweet songs of many birds. He looked round and suddenly he saw before him a beautiful maiden, clothed in a light so soft and yet so brilliant that it made everything near her glow with the radiance of her splendor. And the Lady said to the Indian: 'I am the Virgin Mary, Mother of the true God. And it is my will that here on this spot a temple should be built in my honor. Here will I grant

my protection to all those who shall have recourse to me. Go to the Bishop and tell him that I send you. Make known to him all that you have seen and ask him to build me a church.'

"The Bishop received the Indian kindly but he dismissed him soon and told him he would speak to him on the matter at a later date. With this answer the Indian went back to Our Lady, who was awaiting him at the foot of the hill. And he asked the heavenly Mother to send to the Bishop a person of greater authority than he, so that this person might succeed in the strange embassy. But she answered that though she did have many ambassadors, still she needed his work and his solicitude for the realization of her plan.

"On Sunday the 10th of December, Juan Diego betook himself again to the Bishop. Bishop Zumárraga heard him; he put him many questions and wound up by saying that he, Juan Diego, must bring him a proof and a testimony that such indeed was the will of the Mother of God. When the Indian left him, the Bishop sent his servants after him, that they might watch and follow him. But as they got near the bridge of the river which is not far from the Tepeyac hill, suddenly they lost sight of him.

"On Monday the 11th Juan did not go to see the Bishop, but remained at home with an uncle of his who was seriously ill. The morning of the 12th Juan went to the city to look for a priest who might come and give the last sacraments to his uncle. As he did not want to lose time in a new interview with Our Lady, he took a different path on the other side of the Tepeyac Hill. But lo! the Mother of God again appeared and she told him that all was well with his uncle and that he was cured. She then ordered him to go up to the top of the hill and there pluck some roses, which indeed surprised the Indian on account of their freshness and beauty. Juan did as he was told. He plucked the roses and put them in his *tilma* [a sort of mantle which hangs on both sides of the body somewhat in the style of a poncho]. The *tilma* was made of a *yatl*, a coarse cloth woven out of the agave fiber. He took these roses to Our Lady and she, having first taken them in her hands, put them back in his *tilma* and told him to give them to Bishop Zumárraga as a sign of her desires. He was to carry them with great care and show them to no one.

"Once in the presence of the Bishop, Juan told him everything. He then opened up his *tilma* to show him the flowers. And lo . . . on the coarse cloth of the *ayatl* was the image of Our Lady which we now honor in the Church of Tepeyac.

"When he got home that day, Juan discovered that his uncle had been cured at the very hour and minute on which Our Lady had said that he would. And Juan Bernardino (for such was the name of his uncle) told him that he had also

seen Our Lady and that she had told him that her image was to be called St. Mary of Guadalupe. The Bishop took the image from his palace to the Cathedral and there it was admired by a great throng of people.

"The *ayatl* (on which the holy image was miraculously painted) is thick and well woven; at least as well woven as any *ayatl* can be. It is made up of two pieces, sewn together with cotton. Its length is of seven palms. The face of Our Lady is very beautiful, earnest, and somewhat dark (like the face of the Indians). The color of her cloak is blue-green, spangled with stars, and her tunic is of a reddish hue, embroidered with flowers. She is framed in by the rays of the sun and at her feet is the moon and a little angel between clouds. And it seems that the little angel is very happy to be always bearing upon his shoulders the Queen of Heaven."

The Bishop, of course, is the great Franciscan Juan Zumárraga, the real founder of the Church in Mexico. There is extant a letter which he wrote to the Conquistador, Hernán Cortes, in which he refers to the miracle. Thus the three greatest names of Mexican history are linked together. The image, still on the Indian's cloak, hangs above the altar in the Basilica which was built.

In his beautiful *Album Historico Guadalupano*, published in 1930, the historian of the Church in Mexico, Mariano Cuevas, S.J., has joined together, decade by decade, the documents which testify to the uninterrupted devotion of the Mexican people to the Blessed Virgin under her Mexican title.

He reminds us, too, that the independence of Mexico is inextricably mingled with her name. The first who raised the banner of revolt, the valiant priest Hidalgo, carried her picture around his neck as a scapular through all his battles, and her image was on his battle flags. His successor, another priest, Morelos, also had her on his flags, and he made his famous proclamation in her name. Father Cuevas also reminds us of a thing that has been forgotten in the heat of controversy, but which is perfectly clear from contemporary records, that the "principal ends" of the final movement for independence "were religious" and that Don Agustino Iturbide, who really brought it about, had for his first motive "the salvation of our Faith" against the atheistic Bourbon Court of Spain. Iturbide's first act as Emperor was to found the Imperial Order of Guadalupe. How the new anti-religious doctrines of Spain in turn triumphed over him and Mexico for over a hundred years, is another story, of which this book recounts the latest chapter.

As the preparations for the great celebration of 1931 went on, it was clear that the Government was looking on it with a tolerant eye. Naturally, it was going to bring into the country large numbers of pilgrims, and that would help business and the national railroads. Even Calles was known to have softened in

this regard, and various relaxations of the restrictive laws were made. Permission was given for a religious procession. Things never looked brighter.

It was whispered authoritatively that Calles had put aside thoughts of further persecution. And after all, why not? He had won his point, if that point was to crush the supposed "political power" of the Church, as he had so often proclaimed. Certainly never had the Church been so physically weak as it was at that very moment. And it had kept its word to the letter, that it would confine its activities strictly to the lines of its predestined work. It was with high hopes that the Bishops prepared for the great days to come.

And great days they were. Mexico was stirred to its very depths. Preparatory religious missions were given everywhere and there was never such an outpouring of the Faithful to Confession and Communion. On one day in Guadalajara, a city of 180,000, more than 60,000 people went to Communion. It was the same everywhere. If the purpose of the persecution had been to take away the Faith of the people, it had been a miserable failure.

The week itself of the celebrations was a succession of splendors. There was no civic celebration, as there might have been in happier days, but diplomats from many countries added color to the scene, and many members of Congress and even prominent Government officials, who belonged to the National Revolutionary party itself, attended publicly. (Calles was never a Catholic, though his last marriage was celebrated before a Catholic priest, at the insistent demand of the girl's mother.)

In the Congress, however, there were rumblings. Many Deputies gave themselves the luxury of blaspheming religion and God and the Virgin of Guadalupe. They talked loudly of expelling from the party the renegade Deputies who had publicly professed their faith. Calles himself thought it incumbent on him to deny various rumors that had him taking part in the ceremonies, reviewing the processions, etc. The Government band that played outside the Basilica was punished.

Little notice was taken of these outbreaks. The Church was living under the protection of the *Modus Vivendi*, which President Ortiz Rubio had pledged himself at his inauguration to observe, and which had the backing of the dictator Calles himself. What was uppermost in the minds of everybody was that what had just happened was the clearest possible demonstration that the mind and soul of the Mexicans was overwhelmingly Catholic, that nationality and religion were inseparable in their consciousness.

In a country where political activity was responsive to the will of the voters the mandate would have been imperative. There was no thought, of course, in the minds of the Bishops that such would be the result in the case of the Mexican

Congress, for none knew better than they that politics did not work that way in Mexico. Their sole thought about the matter was, by rousing once again the immemorial appeal of Guadalupe, to bring the souls of all Mexicans back to their home in the Catholic Faith, and thus pave the way to a regeneration of society, which had suffered so many scars in the years of revolution. The centenary celebrations had this very effect, and never was the outlook brighter.

Then the storm broke.

A small cloud had some months before appeared toward the Atlantic Ocean, down in Vera Cruz. In that State the ineffable Tejeda was the Governor, and he had been a thorn in the side of poor Ortiz Rubio. He had allowed all his radical instincts to have free play, and business, foreign and domestic, had filled the air with its wails and lamentations. Not to speak of *amparos*, petitions, and the like. All of which Tejeda ignored. He was even then preparing himself and his followers for his election campaign in 1934 on a Communist ticket.

In due time he had turned his attention to the Church. He had refused to acknowledge the *Modus Vivendi* of the Federal Government and the Church, and many churches remained closed. Many, too, were open. But Tejeda had a gang of gunmen who did vigilante duty, and on July 25, 1931, two of them entered a parish church in Vera Cruz where Fathers Dario Acosta and Alberto Landa were teaching catechism to the children, and stabbed them to death, in reprisal for an attack on him. Feelings began to run high, and at the height of the agitation Tejeda invoked a section of the Federal Constitution which had been overlooked in the settlement.

It was that part of Article 130 which gives the several States the right to limit through their legislatures the number of priests "according to the needs of the population."

The excuse for this article was originally the claim that Mexico was "priest-ridden," and also filled with foreign clergy. Neither of these two claims would hold water, for the number of priests before 1926 was about 4,000, about one to every 3,500 inhabitants, a smaller percentage than almost anywhere in the world. After the troubles it was about 3,000 and there was a crying need for more. The foreign clergy had always numbered less than 1,000 and most of them were members of Religious Orders, engaged in missionary work or teaching. There were no foreigners among the Bishops, either before or after the troubles. All were native Mexicans. Little fear was, then, entertained by the Church authorities that the dangerous article would ever mean anything.

Tejeda showed that it could be made the most terrible weapon against Catholics yet invented.

His law, quickly passed through a subservient legislature, provided for a

limitation of priests in the State of Vera Cruz to one in every 100,000. This was open violation of the Federal Constitution, for nobody could claim that one priest could tend to the "needs" of 100,000 people, even if they were all concentrated in one place. There were 1,100,000 people in the State, spread over 71,896 square kilometers; that meant 11 priests for this immense population.

Protests, appeals to the courts, to the President, to the Congress, were of no avail. Arrests followed by dozens in Vera Cruz, for Catholics naturally looked on the law as an invasion of their rights, protected by the Constitution itself. The law remained, and Tejeda had an army to enforce it.

So things rested until a month after the Guadalupe celebrations. Then, late in December, 1931, the Mexican Congress suddenly adopted a law restricting the number of priests in the Federal District, in which lies Mexico City, to 25 for the 1,500,000 Catholics in that section. And these 25 could be only those who were approved by the Government, without any reference to the Archbishop.

The second phase of the persecution was on: the attack against the Mass and the sacramental life of the Church.

## CHAPTER XIII

### "I WILL STRIKE THE SHEPHERD . . . "

LATE IN THE YEAR 1934 an American and a Mexican were standing at a window overlooking the Zócalo, the great plaza which is bounded by the Cathedral on one side and the great National Palace, one of Spain's gifts to Mexico, on another.

The Mexican pointed to two straggling figures that were passing. They were clad in dun rags; their shoes were torn and full of holes; their hats looked as if they had been picked up on a refuse pile. They were walking toward the Cathedral.

"You see those men?" he asked. "They look pretty poor? They are two priests from Vera Cruz. They come here every day for a visit to the Cathedral, and later go to the offices of the Archbishop for a 'handout.' There are nearly 2,000 priests like them in the city, and most of them are as poor, or nearly as poor, as those two. Hardly a one of them has a peso to his name. They live on the scant resources of the Catholics of the city."

The movement to restrict the number of priests, beginning in 1931, had spread like wildfire all over the country. One State after another had passed laws limiting the priests allowed to one in 40,000, one in 50,000, one in 60,000. Those who were to be registered were assigned to a certain church, and no others could minister or even say Mass privately.

The passing of the law for the Federal District brought an immediate crisis for the Church. Portes Gil was no longer President, it is true; but he had promised the Apostolic Delegate that no such thing would be done by the Federal Government, and that he would prevail on the States to see that free and



full public worship was allowed. His promise was not kept by his party or his successor. The Jacobin radicals were in full hue and cry against the Church, and any politician who dared to question the new laws was denounced as a traitor to his party, and his political future was menaced. It was a case where the moderates were cowed by the clamor of hatred and bigotry.

It was in vain, then, that it was pointed out that the laws were unconstitutional. The section of Article 130 of the Federal Constitution which deals with the limitation of priests reads as follows: "The State Legislatures shall have the exclusive power of determining the maximum number of ministers of religious creeds according to the *needs of each locality*." Thus, according to this law, if there was, say, a town of 500 people with a church in its midst and a priest to serve it, the Legislature had no power to touch it. And the same would go for all other localities, small or large. Their religious needs were protected by the Constitution itself.

Moreover, the Church argued, the *needs* of the people were not considered. As a matter of fact, there was a serious shortage of priests in Mexico. Large expanses of the country were without any priest at all. Even the large cities, while usually supplied with enough churches, had not a sufficient number of priests to serve them.

The religious needs of the people were primarily the Sacraments. Children had to be baptized, then confirmed; confessions had to be heard, Mass said for the people on their Sundays and Holy days of obligation, Communion to be distributed at the Mass. Marriages had to be performed, the sick to be visited and receive Extreme Unction and Viaticum, and the dead to be buried. Catechism had to be taught to the children, and the people to be instructed at Mass. A dozen other personal needs brought the priest into intimate daily contact with most of his people.

It was then pointed out that if a priest could do all this for 5,000 people he would be performing miracles of devotion and zeal. It would take about twenty-four hours a day to do it in. Thus when the number of priests was restricted to one in every 40,000 the exercise of religion in any public form was made impossible for every 35,000; in Vera Cruz where the proportion was one in 100,000, religion was physically impossible for every 95,000. It was obvious now that the purpose of the ruling party was no longer to restrict the exercise of religion to the churches and thus keep it out of any influence on public life; it was to destroy it altogether.

Accordingly, Archbishop Diaz on December 23, 1931, addressed an open letter to the President of the Republic, in which he pointed out that, aside from the law being an open violation of the very Article under which it was passed, it

was also in its effects a violation of Article 24, which guarantees the right of every individual to practise the religion of his choice, and in churches or locals of his preference. This right was impeded for anywhere from 87 per cent to 95 per cent of the population, who were thus deprived of their Constitutional rights.

Lawyers drew up forms of petition for *amparos* for the disaffected priests, and the courts were flooded with hundreds of these petitions. This was followed by similar action by laymen, 60,000 in one day. No attention was paid to any of them, nor was any of the laws ever declared unconstitutional. No judge would have dared to do it.

Consequently, the Church was faced with a cruel dilemma. Should the Bishops accept the law by naming the allowed number of priests and presenting them for registration, thus automatically ruling out all the other priests from their spiritual functions? Or should they resist? Resistance could take the old form of armed rebellion, and it was clear that the Government was hoping that this would be done, to give it a pretext for closing all churches; or it could be by open violation of the law, which would have meant the arrest of all offending priests anyway; or by closing the churches, as in 1926, which would have played into the hands of the radicals.

In their perplexity the Bishops had recourse to the Holy See. Meanwhile, Archbishop Diaz temporarily suspended worship in his Archdiocese, as he had had no time to single out the particular priests he would have recognized by the Government, if he should decide to submit.

The decision of the Pope was to accept the law, as the lesser evil, for it was better to have some churches open and some priests ministering to the people than none at all. He accompanied his reply with a strict injunction to the Apostolic Delegate to inform his people that they were on no account to take up armed resistance; certainly not in the name of the Catholic Church.

So, after a few days of closed churches, the churches of Mexico City were reopened, and the requisite names of 25 priests were submitted to the Government. There was a disposition on the part of some Catholics to look with suspicion on these priests who submitted under orders from their superior, but this quickly abated.

The Archbishop was the only priest allowed for his own vast Cathedral, which has the greatest ground area of any ecclesiastical building in the New World. By special dispensation, he and the other registered clergy were allowed to say three Masses every day, and even then the Cathedral was not large enough to accommodate the crowds. By another dispensation, the Faithful were allowed to fulfil their obligation of hearing weekly Mass on any weekday, since the churches allowed were not large enough to hold the crowds that attempted to

come in on Sundays. By a curious twist, the Archbishop was then accused of having staged an anti-governmental demonstration by showing that the laws were wrong in restricting the priests to so small a number.

It is impossible here to show what this meant to the people in the various States; but we can look at a few of them.

In Vera Cruz, where, at the beginning, the number of priests allowed was 11, for a population of 1,376,476, spread over 71,896 square kilometers, there were never at any time that number actually serving. Governor Tejeda showed himself singularly exacting in passing on the priests presented to him for registration, and so there were always only two or three in service officially. Finally, he grew tired of the farce himself, and had a law passed forbidding any priests at all. Any priest found after that was forcibly ejected from the State. Even Bishop Corona of Papantla, who set up his seat just over the border of the State, was captured in a raid from Vera Cruz, and taken to Mexico City.

In Tabasco, a new kind of law had been passed in 1926. Under the fantastic Garrido Canabal, the Legislature decreed that no priest was allowed in the State unless he were married. Bishop Diaz, a Jesuit, was picked for the See, and he refused to marry, and he refused to go. Finally, he was captured and forcibly ejected from the State. At least one priest, however, was actually serving, clandestinely. He was a foreigner who volunteered for the job, expecting to be martyred. He entered Mexico with a letter of introduction from an Englishman to Garrido himself, and got all the way into Tabasco with it. Of course, he never used it any further. He is still there, for all I know, traversing rivers and mountains in his arduous and heroic apostolate, dying a hundred deaths every day.

The State of Puebla was quite generous at first, allowing 208 priests for 1,150,425 people, or one in 5,530. Later, however, the Governor took umbrage at some saying of Archbishop Vera at the Eucharistic Congress at Buenos Aires, and had a law passed like Tabasco's, requiring every priest to be married. This effectively closed off all priests. This is the same Governor who was unwittingly honored by Ambassador Daniels, just after he had had the law passed, by visiting the Federal Congress with Senator Reynolds at the very moment when that body was honoring the Governor for his courage in passing the law, and eulogizing him to the no doubt grinning Deputies. Later, he invited the courageous Governor to lunch.

Morelos is the State to the southwest of Mexico State. It had been the "sugar bowl" of Mexico, but the once fertile land is now dotted with ruined haciendas, with only the brick chimneys of burned sugar plantations dotting the horizon, the still living remains of the devastation wrought by Emiliano Zapata,

a fanatic who thought the best way to bring salvation to the oppressed peons was by ruining what was their only source of livelihood. It is there you will see the most abject poverty in all the world. It is a miracle how any human beings can exist in such hovels and under such conditions. Morelos, however, was best off of all in priests, 40 for 132,723, or one for every 3,318. Even that meant, of course, that many localities had no priest at all.

Jumping to the North, the State of Chihuahua is the largest in the Union. It was once the domain of the rich Terrazas family, many of whom were educated in the United States. They raised hundreds of thousands of head of cattle, and it was said that it took them several days to ride from one end of their estate to the other. Chihuahua was at first allowed 10 priests for 440,000 people, widely scattered over the vast expanse of the State. The people constantly rebelled, however, against the restrictions, and took every expedient to evade them. A new Governor was appointed, and now no priest at all is allowed. Thousands of people flock into El Paso from Juarez and the surrounding country to get to Mass on Sundays.

For a while the people of Northern Chihuahua were in clover. The Governor offered extremely low rates on the railroads for the bull fights on Sunday in Juarez. The trains were crowded with people, who rode to Juarez, and then went right on across the bridge—to Mass. The bull-fight reductions were then stopped.

Lower California has a more moving story to tell. In that enormous territory, fourth largest in the country, only two priests were allowed at first for a population of 95,516. Later, no priests were allowed at all. But on Holy Thursday, the people of one of the towns in the North desired to have the traditional Repository in their church. So they picked out a little boy of ten, dressed him all in white, white shoes, stockings, trousers and coat, and several armed men took him in a car into the United States. There a parish priest gave him the Blessed Sacrament in a lunette, and with his escort the little fellow brought his precious Burden back to the parish church, which was crowded. He marched up to the altar, which was banked with flowers and lights, and placed the Blessed Sacrament upon it. Two altar boys incensed It, and the congregation, without a priest, sang, adored, and prayed all day. As night fell, the boy took his sacred Charge, still with his escort in the automobile, back into a free country.

Further east, along the border, is Coahuila, third largest State. It is a mountainous State, a center of mining operations. It was allowed at first 25 priests for 436,425 people, but later the number was reduced to only 5, or one for every 87,000. A number of towns are grouped in the northern part of the State, and the people took to going into Eagle Pass for Mass and the Sacraments. But

the Governor got wind of that and soldiers were stationed on all roads leading into the United States to prevent it. They were not even allowed to practise their religion in another country!

In the State of Michoacan, one of the most populous and Catholic of the States, the Governor was General Lázaro Cárdenas. He seems to have had some idea of meeting the charge of unconstitutionality, so he divided the State into eleven districts, allowed three priests for each district and even delimited their parishes for them. Archbishop Ruiz, however, who was Archbishop of the capital, Morelia, besides being Apostolic Delegate, was quick to point out that both in this and in the accompanying regulations the Governor had violated the law in half a dozen ways.

A novel interpretation of the law took place in the State of Chiapas, in the South. There the law allowed only four "ministers of religion." This was little enough, seeing that the State has a population of 528,654. But the Governor interpreted this in his own fashion. He allotted one place to the "schismatical clergy," one to the Protestants, and two to the Catholics. He was unable, however, to find a schismatic priest, so he left that place open. Moreover, he assigned the two Catholic priests a certain part of the State. It was one of the most difficult in Mexico, the "Lacandoness," where there is hardly even a track over the mountains for a horse to pass. The other priests in this State, as in many others, simply remained in their parish houses, defying the State to expel them. Guards were set to watch them to see that they did not say Mass, and the watch became so rigorous that some of them fled into Guatemala and others went into hiding.

There were fourteen States in 1935 that had finally forbidden all priests and made saying Mass or giving the Sacraments a penal offense. These were: Campeche, Colima, Chihuahua, Chiapas, Guerrero, Lower California, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tabasco, Tamaulipas, Tlaxcala, Vera Cruz, Yucatan, and Zacatecas. These States have a total area of 435,551 square miles, and a total population of 6,037,438. Thus the practice of religion, guaranteed by the Federal Constitution, remains completely forbidden there.

In all the other States, with a total population of 9,975,135, there are only 334 priests allowed. This put more than 2,500 priests out on the street with no means of livelihood. Many a poverty-stricken man whom tourists have seen walking the streets of Mexico City is a priest expelled from his State. At the end of 1935 the 2,000 of them living in the capital were a most severe drain on the already dwindling resources of the charitable people of that city.

How those lived who remained with their flocks will be told in another chapter. In Guadalajara they were particularly persistent in remaining behind,

and suffered the usual penalties. From December, 1934, to March, 1935, for instance, 35 priests were imprisoned and 10 were cast out of the State. This was probably the worst record, but all other States where priests remained could show somewhat the same figures. We will see, also, that these arrests were not confined to priests who were disobeying the law; frequently the registered priest suffered the same fate, according to the capricious whims of local authorities.

During the quieter times of 1929 to 1932, many seminaries had started up again. Thus both the major and minor Seminaries in Mexico City were located in large private houses rented from landlords. When the laws against the priests went into effect, local authorities extended them to the Seminarians, or those who were studying for the priesthood. Eleven seminaries, in Mexico City, Puebla, Aguascalientes, Leon, Guadalajara, Huejutla, Oaxaca, Morelia, Saltillo, Vera Cruz, Tacámbaro, and Yucatan, were closed and confiscated. The Seminarians were dispersed and mostly went back to their parents. In three places, Mexico City, Saltillo, and Puebla, they were arrested in a body. How some dioceses, however, carried on the training of priests in spite of all will be told in another chapter.

There was a more serious consequence of the laws on priests. When the priests were arrested, or "limited" out of the ministry, what was to become of all the churches? According to the law, each priest registered was attached irrevocably to one church alone. The rest of the churches simply remained without a priest, or Mass, or the Blessed Sacrament. And to Catholics a church without the altar is just a pretty shell.

Early in the movement the Government began to take cognizance of all these deserted temples. I have before me an official list, culled from the *Diario Oficial*, the Government gazette, of the churches which were confiscated.

Tourists in Mexico City have often reported that they saw the churches open there as usual. As a matter of fact, the *Diario* records that thirty-one churches in the capital and the Federal District had been taken over for profane uses up to March 14, 1935. Their destination was all the way from stables for horses to moving picture halls and gymnasiums. In 1933 a sudden descent was made on the city of Guadalajara, and between March and November thirteen churches were converted. The destination of one of these is interesting. The *Diario* for November 30 records that the Church of La Soledad in Guadalajara had been turned over to the Protestant Episcopal Church of Mexico for its own use.

Altogether I have records up to March, 1935, that 265 churches, or rectories, mostly churches, had been taken over by the Government, and converted to other uses. It is interesting to note, however, that in this list there are ten Protestant churches also that have been confiscated. On October 3, the

Presbyterian church received from the Government the Catholic church of St. Catherine of Siena in Mexico City; and then on November 15, the Presbyterian church of the Divine Saviour in the same city was taken away from them, and demolished to enlarge a street. Other Protestant churches confiscated were at Toluca (September 2, 1932); Cumpas, Cananea, Magdalena, and Hermosillo, all in Sonora (September 6, 7, 10, 1934); Pitiquito and Nogales, Sonora (October 2 and 6, 1934); the Church of God in Nogales, Sonora (October 19, 1934).

Some of the States suffered more severely than others. Thus the State of Chiapas was a heavy loser. Already in June, 1932, one church was taken at Tapachula; but from September 29 to October 6, 1934, no less than eighty-three in that State were taken at one swoop. I do not know how many churches there were in that State, but most of them must have gone.

Incidentally, this disposes of another story that went the rounds some years ago. It was claimed when all the churches were closed that the people did not mind the absence of the priest; they went to church just the same and prayed without the "intervention" of any priest, thus showing that in the minds of the people there was no need of one, and so the Government had "purified" the religion of the natives. After this, in States like Chiapas and Sonora they will have to practise their religion in the privacy of their homes, if at all. In Sonora, there is no record of any confiscation of any church until July 18, 1934. But then they begin in earnest. From that time until October 19 thirty-six churches were confiscated.

One church in Mexico City that had a special sentimental interest was closed on September 10, 1932. It was San José de los Obreros—St. Joseph of the Workers. It was constructed by laborers, who gave their work out of their spare time, and even contributed the materials out of their savings. It was given by the Government to the so-called Schismatic Church of the Patriarch Perez. Several times the workers tried to get it back, and when the schismatic movement collapsed they tried again. They always held that it belonged to them, and not either to the Church or the Government. None of their efforts to recover it ever came to anything, and it remained the property of the State.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CATACOMBS

THE VIOLENT PASSIONS aroused among the people by these measures were certain to give rise to bloody scenes all over the Republic. As usual, the trouble started in Vera Cruz, where the Governor was beginning to nourish Presidential ambitions. Following the shooting of Fathers Acosta and Landa, described in another chapter, the mobs were let loose on the churches. In Jalapa, according to a New York *Times* dispatch on July 26, 1931, the crowds rushed a gasoline station and carried off many cans of petrol. Others were supplied with dynamite bombs. These men were all recognized as Government employes, disguised as laborites and agrarians.

First of all, they went to the Cathedral, which dated from 1773. This was sprayed with gasoline, bombs were set, and the "imposingly massive structure," as it is called in the guide books, was badly damaged. Then other churches were attacked, the Good Shepherd, Medallín, Los Naranjos, and San Salvador Acajcte, and according to the report of the Bishop from which I take these details, were completely ruined. Numbers protested, and rioting followed, in which many were hurt, and at the height of the excitement, a young Indian, going to the root of the trouble, sought out the Governor in the patio of the Government Palace. He opened fire on Tejeda, who gave as well as he took. Dodging behind pillars, he kept up a running fire with the youth, who was finally severely wounded and overpowered. Tejeda was pinked in the ear and hand.

At this juncture Bishop Guizar y Valencia intervened. He called on his people not to resist with violence, but ended with this moving appeal to the State Government:



"Listen to me, rulers of the State of Vera Cruz! You can continue to multiply your crimes, to destroy the lives of priests and honorable citizens, and to despoil them of their temporal goods. By brute force and acts of savagery you can hinder them from giving worship to God within the confines of the churches. But know that in every Veracruzan breast there is a heart that yearns for God, a soul that is upheld by the fire of Divine love, and the more it is combated by the Neroes of the world, the brighter this love will burn within them. . . . You can rest assured that not for one moment will I abandon the children whom I love so much and whom Jesus Christ has placed under my care."

Bishop Guizar meant what he said; he is a big man of stout courage, indefatigable industry, and a pawky sense of humor. More than once, in former years, he had taken his troubles straight to Mexico, and Calles himself had learned to smile at him, to respect and even like him. He was deadly serious now. To Tejeda he sent this telegram:

"Before the eyes of the Republic and the world, I offer to present myself personally to you, so that you may wound me and kill me, if in exchange you will promise to allow the people of Vera Cruz full liberty and will not spill the blood of my priests and my beloved flock." And he ended it with a prayer to God to have compassion on the Governor and his followers.

But Tejeda did not stop at Vera Cruz. On August 31 he sent agents to Mexico City itself, with orders to dynamite the ancient church of La Profesa, formerly belonging to the Society of Jesus, and one of Mexico's gems of architecture and art, founded in 1597. They set a bomb and it did great damage. But the perpetrators of the outrage were arrested and on them, according to the Mexico City press at the time, was found a letter from the Government Secretary of Vera Cruz, Vasquez Vela, whom we will meet later in the Cabinet of President Cárdenas, in which that worthy told them that not only should they agitate in favor of anti-clericalism, but that they should dynamite churches, sow terror among the people, and prepare them to support the candidacy for the Presidency of Colonel Tejeda.

This was evidently a settled policy, for some people passing by caught a child of ten throwing a bomb into the parish church of St. Michael in Orizaba. The fuse was extinguished in time, but the bystanders took the boy to the police, who promptly let him go free.

The high temperature engendered by all this spread, we are not surprised to find, to the Federal Congress, and on August 25, 1931, two opposed groups of Deputies began shooting at each other in the Chamber itself, during the course of a hot debate. One Deputy was killed and two others wounded.

It was obvious that the Church, faced with a serious situation, must supply

its people with rules to follow in the new crisis. These took two forms, a set of regulations to follow so that the conduct of the clergy should be irreproachable before the law, and an appeal to the laity not to take up arms in defense of the Church alone. Here are the rules promulgated by Archbishop Diaz. They are interesting as showing what extremes the Church was in, and were a model for other dioceses:

"1. All priests shall remain in the places to which they have been appointed and shall try to do all the good possible for the Faithful who have been entrusted to them.

"2. No priest shall be registered before the civil authority without previous authorization from his Ordinary and without having made protest in conformity with the model which will be provided.

"3. If a priest is obliged by force to desert the church which has been given into his care, he should secure evidence that he was forced out by violence. He should then have recourse to the *amparo* before competent authority and give immediate notice to his ecclesiastical superior.

"4. In every instance a priest who is the victim of such an attack, shall continue, in every way possible, to care for the welfare of the souls entrusted to him; and for his consolation let him think of the greater merit his apostolic labor will have because of the greater difficulties to be overcome.

"5. If any priest shall receive proposals to continue in his ministry as recognized by the civil authority, let him go immediately to his ecclesiastical superior to secure the necessary authorization.

"6. If any priest—and we hope to God there will not be such a one—dares to register or to seek some church from the authority of the State without having the necessary ecclesiastical authorization, he shall incur the canonical penalties in the case, including deprivation of office, a penalty in the application of which, much to our sorrow, we will be inflexible."

This last regulation reveals the anxiety which lay at the heart of the whole matter. The danger of schism through misguided zeal was great, and there is no doubt that the Government was aiming at just such an outcome, where good priests might feel that their spiritual duty to their flocks bound them to secede from the Church, and open up an independent church. And of course the rewards would be great. It is the glory of the Church in Mexico that the Government was unable to produce a single priest who yielded to the temptation of an easy life and the favor of the State.

A danger of another kind lay in the wholly legitimate desire of a large group in Mexico to end the miserable business by taking up arms and overthrowing the Government by force. Nobody could say that Catholic citizens had no right to

attempt this, if all legitimate means had failed. It was one thing, however, to revolt against a tyrant in the name of civil rights, and it was another to raise the religious banner in a specific war for religion.

Accordingly, after direct instructions from the Holy See, the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Ruiz y Flores, in February, 1931, and again in May, 1932, and a third time in August of the same year, and Archbishop Diaz in October, 1932, warned their flocks against "even thinking of raising the religious banner urging to arms," either "to remedy the present situation or to attenuate the evils of the present moment." He added: "However the recourse to arms can be defended in theory, the Episcopacy, with common accord, and in conformity with the injunctions of the Holy Father, has made known to Catholics: 'There must be no thought of armed defense.' "

This stand, so emphatically repeated, put Mexican Catholics under the contradictory charge of being cowards if they did not fight, and of incurring the opprobrium of the non-Catholic world if they did. However, in view of world opinion and especially of the known attitude of the United States Government, there was no other course to follow.

The result was a continual martyrdom. As the regulations imply, the Church refused to admit the constitutionality or legality of the limitations of the clergy and the prohibition to exercise the sacred ministry outside of civil authorization. Consequently, each one was bidden to remain at his post, and when he was arrested, to appeal to the law. They did remain, as long as they physically could.

Many were arrested and ill-treated. Some were shot. At San Julian, a small town in Jalisco, Father Apolinar Perez was saying Mass for his congregation when an unknown aggressor entered the church and shot him in the back of the head. The people were so aroused by the event that they mobbed the assailant, men and women struck him with canes and umbrellas and almost killed him, and he was rescued with difficulty by the police. Later he confessed being an agent of Tejeda.

In Irimbo, in Michoacan, not only was the priest arrested for saying Mass but the whole congregation was rounded up. The priest was kept in prison. In Querétaro, several priests were arrested and kept in cells with common criminals. In Guadalajara four priests were arrested at one time. They had no beds, and people in the city sent some into them. When they were released on payment of the fine, the police refused to give back the beds, and the priests had to pay the owners for them. In the same city Father Urdanivia, S.J., authorized chaplain for foreigners, was accused of giving spiritual consolation to people in Spanish, and was punished. Another priest there was arrested for publishing a "subversive" parish bulletin, and when he was released he was minus his watch,

his wallet, and other personal effects. The police kept them. In the State of Mexico at San Jerónimo, Father Leon Camona was arrested while performing a marriage ceremony. He was expelled from the State. But the list could be prolonged indefinitely. The usual punishment was 500 pesos fine, and fifteen days in jail. Nobody knows how many suffered this, but there were very many. I know of one priest who has served fifteen jail sentences.

Meanwhile, all sorts of ridiculous restrictions were visited on the people. In Guadalajara, the police became annoyed at the ringing of bells on registered churches. So they issued regulations for "noise control" among which was a prohibition to ring for more than thirty seconds, except on civic holidays, or "when the Governor considers it opportune." One Ash Wednesday, in the same city, large numbers of people went around with ashes on their foreheads. All who were caught were arrested and fined. One priest in Torreon used to give sweets to children when he met them on the street. He was arrested one day while doing it, but the bystanders put up a spirited resistance. He was taken to jail anyway, and fined fifty pesos for resisting arrest. In Mexico City, many priests who could afford them had to give up their telephones, they were tampered with so often. The interference of the State in spiritual affairs went so far that in many places on May 1, 1932, which happened to fall on a Sunday, the Governor closed the registered churches, so that the Faithful could attend the celebrations of the Red Labor Day.

Not always, however, did the people submit tamely to the outrages. At least one priest is on record who took things into his own hands. In Monterey one day Father Toribio Cantù, a registered priest, was unvesting himself after Mass when two well-dressed youths entered the sacristy. One of them took out a revolver and the other a dagger. They told him to put up his hands. He did; so violently that he knocked the pistol out of the hand of the astonished young man, and then he kicked them both out.

In Campeche, a State where religion was by some supposed to be weak because of the small number of priests, the Regional Workers' Congress passed a resolution to destroy all images, pictures, and other religious objects belonging to the Church. The word got around, however, and mobs formed in the streets threatening violence to the members of the Congress if they attempted such a thing. Things began to look ugly, when somebody telephoned the Federal Capital. An order was then forthcoming dissolving the Congress. The members walked out breathing threats of vengeance. Garrido Canabal was later to show them how it could be done.

But the really prize story of resistance comes, as might be expected, from Guadalajara, but surprisingly enough from children.

Father Felipe Betancourt, S.J., was in the pulpit of San Felipe's church, one day in February, 1933, presiding over a Catechism class of 500 children, all aged twelve or under. The church was one of the authorized places, and this was not a religious service. Four policemen suddenly entered, and ordered the Father to go with them. Immediately bedlam broke loose. The children stood on the pews and howled. Some of them ran out and came back with sticks, stones, anything to throw; and they threw them. Father Betancourt tried to calm them, but nothing doing! Meanwhile, other boys ran out and punctured the tires of the police car, and rolled it down the street.

Inside, the four police were in serious danger. They escaped, however, out of the church, but their car was not there, and they held off the howling children only at the point of a gun. One finally went and telephoned the fire department. Then, under a barrage from hoses, the children were held at bay until the Chief of Police came with men armed with carbines. Father Betancourt, under a rain of kicks and blows, was thrown into an automobile and taken off. But the children followed, yelling through the streets all the way to the police station, where they stayed for hours demanding the release of the Father, until they were driven away by deluges of water from fire hoses. Later, Father Betancourt was fined 200 pesos for inciting to riot.

Force had to be used on another occasion which is on record when Father Angel Huidobro, who was not a registered priest, was arrested at San Cristobal Ecatepec, Mexico. He was sick in bed, but agents were sent to see if he was officiating. He was not, but he was dragged out of bed, and thrown into a car. Meanwhile a crowd had collected and when the sick Father appeared in the hands of the police, it became menacing. A hail of stones fell on the car, and a rush was made for it. The police had to fire over the crowd's heads, before they could escape.

In another case, near Leon, in the State of Guanajuato, Father Apolinar Rangel was giving catechism in his church of San Francisco del Rincon, when two men entered to kill him with daggers. The boys and girls rushed up to the priest and literally covered him with their bodies to protect him from the assassins, while others ran shouting for help. Finally, the police came, and arrested one of the would-be assailants.

Incidents like these could be repeated indefinitely. These are chosen because they show something of the danger in which all priests lived and of the temper of the people, who were powerless to do anything about it.

One other story will be told, however, for it happened in the very church at Irapuato with which this book opened, and it ended in a double tragedy.

Father Martin Lawers, the pastor of that church, a man of blameless life and

of English descent, was preaching on the altar on February 19, 1933, when an individual sprang up to him and stabbed him in the back.

The patience of the people suddenly broke. With cries of rage they leaped on the assassin and literally beat and then trampled him to death. Father Lawers died shortly afterward. Many were arrested, but who could tell what blow on the man had caused his death? They were all released. Besides, the populace was deeply aroused, after all the outrages which were being committed on priests all over the country in 1932 and 1933, and it might be dangerous to take any strong measures against them. Needless to say, the incident made a deep impression on the whole country, and so far as I know, no other priest has been killed since that time.

But my mind has often wandered back to that parish church in Irapuato, and the little Indian I saw praying there, and I wonder what he was doing then, and what is now in his mind. . . .

So far the story of these two years has shown a little of what the Church underwent during that time, so soon after the glorious triumph of December, 1931, at Guadalupe. But only a part of it has been told, for a whole saga of secret heroism and daring sprang up, and it centered about the Blessed Sacrament.

The story begins at Vera Cruz, as always.

In that State it quickly became impossible to have any services at all in the churches. Raids were frequent, and punishment was swift. But the priests did not depart, they went into hiding. The Bishop did not care to risk the lives and property of his lay Faithful, so Mass was not said very often in private houses, except now and then, and when the risk of detection was small.

The people could not have Mass, but they could not be deprived of Holy Communion. The minister of this Sacrament is ordinarily the priest, but in case of extreme need lay people can administer it to themselves. It was often done in the early ages of the Church, and the Church in Mexico was back in those ages without a doubt.

Bishop Guizar, therefore, began the formation of what he called Eucharistic Centers. Lay people who volunteered for the risky duty were allowed to keep the Blessed Sacrament in their own homes. As I have mentioned before, in the case of the English lady who visited Vera Cruz during this time, it was kept in all sorts of decent places, even in radio cabinets and book cases, when there was danger of detection.

These centers were well organized. A priest stood in hiding at certain stated places, and there he said Mass. He consecrated the requisite number of Hosts, and ladies and children appointed for the task would come and get them, and bring them to the centers, in all secrecy, of course.

Passwords were adopted and the word was spread around that Communion could be had at such and such a place. On giving the password, the communicant was admitted and administered the Sacrament to himself. I do not know of anything which brings home, to me, at least, just what it meant and means, for a Catholic, to be living in Mexico at this hour.

Little by little, as the churches were closed and the priests dispersed, the practice spread all over the country. In one year, there were between 30,000 and 40,000 Communions of this kind in the State of Vera Cruz alone. How many thousands more there were in the other States, it is at present impossible to know.

A young American, in Mexico for his health, later wrote of a scene that he said he would never forget as long as he lived. Somewhere in the State of Chihuahua he was invited to be present at an actual Mass which was to be said behind barred doors. Early in the morning with a guide he made his way to a certain house, pushed the door open, and soon found himself in a room that had been transformed into a chapel. It was a time when it was a penal offense, as it is still, to say or hear Mass in that State.

"At a few minutes before six the front door opened and a little old man, with all the appearance of the typical Mexican house servant, entered. With him was a small boy. They were the eighty-year-old priest and his altar boy. Finally, when the candles had been lighted, the doors and windows securely bolted, and the priest had changed his street clothing for the Vestments, Mass began. . . ."1

As he knelt there, the American could not help but think of all the people in the State who could not hear Mass, and who had not heard it for two or three years, and who might not for many years to come. Would their faith hold out? It had not in England, with whose conditions in penal days the present state of Mexico had such striking resemblances. And he resolved to tell the story of Mexico everywhere, so that the power of world public opinion might force the rulers of Mexico to abate their persecution.

## CHAPTER XV

### DEADLOCK

TO MOST AMERICANS, including many Catholics, the trouble in Mexico was a grand puzzle. Why should the Government, after it had thoroughly cowed the Catholics there, taken their churches, closed their schools, imprisoned many of their priests and nuns, forbidden their ministry, crushed their riots of protest in bloody reprisals, attacked their good name abroad, and put into the Constitution all kinds of sumptuary laws against them, why should it continue to flog a Church that was apparently powerless to dislodge it? This question was widely asked.

It could not be "politics," for that means votes; the Government did not need any votes, for only its own votes were counted. Politics, as we know it, plays very little part in Mexico. Could it be mere blind hatred of God and religion for themselves, without any other motive of self-preservation or gain? The Church could not hurt it, and its enemies would not help the Church; why did the Government hate it or fear it? Few people were able to understand the dominating motive behind the apparent madness.

The answer to the puzzle can be made in one phrase: the desire to dominate. This unwearying, undaunted drive for domination was the key to the enigma. The Government was totalitarian as Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini never were.

In politics the domination was already complete, dating from the time that Calles left the Presidential chair in December, 1928. There was only one political party in Mexico; all others had been driven out or underground. The National Revolutionary party was as much in exclusive control as the Nazis, the Communists, or the Fascists in their respective countries.



To bring about this exclusive political domination, it was first necessary to dominate another agency, the Army. Calles had the Army from the beginning. It was the foundation of his power. No matter who was President, the Secretary of War was a Calles man. The frequent changes in that position merely signified that the incumbent was becoming ambitious and branching out on his own. Calles owned the Army before he consolidated politics. How he did it was simple; he devised a complicated system of rewards, mostly in the money sector. With himself at the inside of the financial web, as we shall see, he was able to ensnare all the luxury-loving soldiers he wanted. It has been an axiom of Mexican life for a century (and probably for ten centuries) that he who owns the Army owns the country. Calles always saw to it that he owned the Army.

After the Army, came Labor. This meant the working people of the cities. The CROM was the exclusive labor syndicate, which made a great parade of wresting justice for the proletariat from the foreign capitalist. It did succeed in wresting a certain amount of justice, but it did far more in the line of creating for Calles the domination he was seeking in the industrial world. In fact, that was the sole reason it was created. For a time, it was actually armed. Later, when it was thoroughly regimented, it was disarmed; it then existed only as a potential menace whenever Calles wanted to call on it.

After labor, the farmer. The agrarian program followed the same line as the labor policy; it issued promises of land for everybody and down with the big landowners. It did divide up some of the Mexican land, but, as Calles admitted in 1928, that merely meant a sharp drop in agricultural products. The former peons had not the slightest idea how to farm for themselves, and it was apparently too much trouble for the comfortable revolutionaries in the cities to show them how, if they knew themselves. What it did, and what it was designed to do, was again to supply Calles with an armed force in the country districts, and to transfer enormous properties to him and his friends. Again the sole idea of domination. After the new farmers began to feel their political oats, they were disarmed, just like the city laborers. But they were always there to be used, when the need arose.

For some years, however, little had been heard of the labor and agrarian policies. They had served their purposes in their time. Secure in the political, military, labor, and agrarian fields, Calles had begun to reap the fruits; he reached out after Big Money.

One of the principal Mexican corporation lawyers, himself an old Carranza intellectual, explained to me how he did it. He organized great holding companies for the principal staples, grain, sugar, salt, hemp, cotton, and now oil. These holding companies, like Azucar, S. A. (Sugar, Inc.), were wholly owned

by Calles and his immediate friends. They operated variously, but the effect was the same, a practical monopoly. If companies already existed, shares were bought to gain control; if they were not controlled, they were forced by various measures to sell out to the monopoly.

Thus during these silent three or four years Calles put himself at the head of a gigantic consortium such as has rarely existed anywhere. The way for this was begun in oil by the so-called Morrow settlement, the net result of which was to create an almost complete stagnation in oil production, which, added to the world overproduction, had reduced the value of the Mexican properties considerably. In such a situation it was always easy to buy. The process was: a dispute, a "settlement," depreciation, foreclosure, monopoly. When that happened, domination was complete.

Meanwhile, an ominous thing happened. So far as I know, it was not reported in the world press. The Mexican Constitution establishes the same kind of separation of powers as exists in the United States: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. In 1934, the Mexican Chamber of Deputies abolished the life term for Supreme Court judges; thereafter, all judges were appointed by the President, and their terms are of six years, to coincide with the President's. Mexican courts have never been entirely independent, as I have indicated; after that they were merely an adjunct of the executive. The last shred of political liberty disappeared with them.

What had this to do with the religious question? Simply this. It can now be seen that Calles had not swerved one hair's breadth from his course: to control all forces in the Mexican state. To do this, he had to go further than merely controlling material forces. He found out that people must *think* with him, or ultimately he would fall. Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin had also found that out. So, as we shall see, education became the last and most important stronghold to conquer and dominate. As Calles was to say in the famous speech which Mr. Daniels echoed: "We [meaning himself and his party] must enter into and take possession of the minds of the children, the minds of the youth." There was the clear note of intellectual domination, the greatest of all.

Only the Church stood across the path to this goal. It had always stood across that path.

It was, therefore, not only hatred of the Church or religion, as we understand that term in this country, which animated Calles. He simply could not tolerate that any other force than himself should share with him domination of the people. This desire for power, his most obvious characteristic, drove him, and had always driven him, to refuse to allow a spiritual educating body like the Church to have any part in the Mexicans' minds. The real militant atheists were a

convenient weapon to his hands.

The first phase of the struggle had been to detach the Mexican Church from the world unity of the Catholic Church, by making it an exclusively national organization, a part of the political pattern of the State. This effort had failed in 1929, but the State had taken from the Church most of its material instruments. The second effort was aimed at the inner, sacramental life of the Church, by closing the churches and forbidding the ministry of its clergy. That had largely succeeded, outwardly at least. Actually, it merely drove the Church underground, and priests exercised their spiritual influence as best they could. The last step was imminent: an attempt to capture the minds of the Faithful themselves.

Every reality in Mexico looks like something else. The labor policy looks like liberalism; the agrarian policy looks like altruism; the business policy looks like nationalism; the political policy looks like state capitalism; the religious policy looks like atheist bigotry (which of all kinds of bigotry is the worst bigotry). All are merely our old friend, totalitarianism. Calles was the Mexican Fascist.

In 1932, however, one world voice spoke out against him. From the Vatican came a protest that had far-reaching consequences.

The Pope took the almost unprecedented step of addressing an Encyclical to the Archbishops and Bishops of Mexico on the subject of the persecution to which they had been subjected, because they had kept their word and protected from rebellion the Government which had persecuted them. In this document, which was called from its first Latin words, "Acerba Animi," the Pope

1. Outlined for the world at large the history and nature of this persecution;
2. Settled for Mexican Catholics a semi-doctrinal dispute which had arisen between the Church authorities and those who had chafed under their apparent mildness; and
3. Strictly enjoined a policy of physical non-resistance to evil and of union with the Church in legitimate protest against unconstitutional "laws."

Mr. Morrow's policy of "peace without victory" had won out. As he had expressed it to me, the State was deprived of any pretext for further persecution, and the Church made it clear that it had no pretensions in the political field.

But everything depended on the Government's keeping its word, as the Pope pointed out.

Without any further pretext for persecution, persecution had continued. "Bishops, priests, and faithful Catholics continued to be penalized and imprisoned, contrary to the spirit in which the *Modus Vivendi* had been established." Property was still confiscated. "Notwithstanding explicit promises, priests and laymen who had steadfastly defended the Faith were abandoned to

the cruel vengeance of their adversaries." Immediately after the agreement, "increased violence was noticed in the campaign of the press against clergy, Church, and God Himself." Religious primary education was forbidden, and "impure and blasphemous teachings were perpetrated in the public schools."

But "the clearest manifestation of the will to destroy the Catholic Church," continued the Pope, was the prohibition in some States of any Bishops; their ordinary acts of jurisdiction were outlawed. Only those who were well acquainted with the inner workings of the Church could have devised such measures, just as only true believers in God can really blaspheme.

In view of all this, it was no wonder that many Mexicans had come to believe that it was wrong to coöperate with such a state, even to the extent of asking it for permission for the few priests who were allowed for a small number of the Faithful. This question had been agitated for some time among Mexicans, and brought about an acute difference of opinion.

The Pope replied to this problem of conscience by remarking that he has heard "all" sides to this question, even that of "those who appeared to counsel a return to a severer line of conduct, with the total suspension of public worship throughout the Republic, as in 1926." He refused to impose one absolute rule for all the States, for conditions were different in different States, and he praised those Bishops who had "wisely interpreted" his previous instructions. But he did settle once for all the burning question of "coöperation" with an atheist government by deciding that asking the permission for priests to officiate was "material," not "formal," cooperation. The evil of clergy restriction was permitted, not willed, on the proviso only that, while asking for the licenses, the Church continue its protests by legitimate means in order to show the ignorant Faithful that it did not acquiesce in them.

Thus the Pope made it clear that, whatever happened, nobody would ever be able to implicate the Church in political movements. He advocated, of course, unity of Catholics in their organization, Catholic Action, which is a very different thing from civic or political action. And he ended with words of touching admiration for the courage of his children, particularly the priests, who were fighting a lonely battle with very little encouragement from any except from him.

Official answers to this Encyclical were made by Mexican officials, even before the full text was known to them. Luis Leon, the leader of the Calles party in the Chamber, characterized it as "basically vulgar," words which struck all who knew that gentleman as slightly comical. He also found that it was "far from the humility which Christ preached." General Rodriguez, who was the current Calles favorite and Provisional President, also found the Encyclical "vulgar," and

in spite of the decisions of the Encyclical which went against those who would make war on him, he made warlike threats to suppress the Church altogether. But this time the opponents of the Church had a united world opinion against them. Before, they had the excuse that they were bent on destroying only the political influence of the Church, not its spiritual activities. This excuse was what had won over Protestant and liberal forces to their side. The Pope had unveiled that excuse and destroyed it. The political phantom had vanished in 1926-1929; religion itself was now clearly their game.

In this regard, one expression of General Rodriguez was significant. He taunted the Pope with being "unable to resign himself to the loss of his dominion over souls. . . ."

One action was taken, however, and that immediately, before the full text of the Encyclical was available showing that the Pope had openly forbidden political or armed action to be taken against the Government. That was the expulsion of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Ruiz. Only a news summary of the Papal document, however, was published in the Mexican press at first, giving those parts alone which stressed the nature of the persecution; but shortly after the whole text was cabled.

For days a torrent of discussion had raged in the Chamber of Deputies. The burden of all this was that a foreign potentate had dared to interfere in the domestic affairs of a sovereign nation, and had actually stirred up certain citizens of that nation to resist the lawful authority. The reality was just the opposite, of course; but the Pope had arrested the attention of the nations of the world to the true state of affairs in Mexico.

Archbishop Ruiz was quietly eating his supper in his own private house, when someone turned on his radio at the moment when it was announced that he was to be deported, as the agent of this foreign Power. He did not lose his usual serenity, I am informed by one who was with him at the time. "If they come right now," he said, "I am ready to leave the country just as I am." And he went on eating his supper.

The next morning, he was aroused at five o'clock by an agent of the Minister of the Interior. He was ordered to go to the offices of the Ministry at once. He was not allowed to communicate with anyone. He had time to take only his Breviary, nothing else. At the offices he was detained until 12:30 P.M., and then was driven out to the airport. There he was put on an airplane, with Matamoros on the American border as his destination. Two policemen accompanied him. The plane was forced down, however, before it reached its destination, and turned back to Tampico. There he was put on a train under a strong guard of soldiers, and the following day he arrived at Laredo, Texas. It

was only then that his friends in Mexico City knew what had become of him. He has remained in the United States ever since.

Archbishop Ruiz has been for twenty years one of the most important figures in the Church in Mexico. From his earliest days he had shown an uncommon ability for government. He had been successively Bishop of Leon in Guanajuato, then Archbishop of Monterey, and finally Archbishop of Morelia, which position he holds at the present time. During these years he had been especially devoted to the training of his clergy, to promoting Catholic education, and, as a specialist before his time, to encouraging Liturgical music.

This last effort I had myself an opportunity to appreciate, when in his glorious Cathedral of Morelia, one afternoon, the *Orfeon Pio X*, the choir he had founded there, gave me a private audition. Had the times been better, and some initial money been forthcoming, we would have been able to give audiences in the United States a taste of the excellent musicianship of this choir which was famed only in Mexico.

To Leon he brought the Marist Brothers for the education of boys and the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, the Sisters of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the Teresian Sisters, for the education of girls. He restored the Cathedral there. Two seminarians whom he sent from Leon to study at Rome, where he had also made his own studies, became later two of the great heroes of the Catholic laity in Mexico, Bishop Manriquez of Huejutla, and Bishop Navarrete of Sonora.

He actually transformed the city of Monterey during his stay there. The clergy and the education of youth were again his especial interests, and from a city in which Protestant missionaries and Masonic influences had chiefly made their mark, he made it one of the most flourishing Catholic towns in Mexico. When he was transferred to Morelia, capital of one of the largest States in Mexico, he continued the same kind of work, only to see it later all but destroyed, for Morelia became one of the chief centers, after Guadalajara, of the Catholic resistance of 1926-1929.

To the end he was a man of great civic virtue. During the very week in which he was deported, Government officials were dedicating the new water system to which he had contributed for the people of Temascaltingo out of his own patrimony.

His exile raised a great commotion in Mexico, as was natural. It was done under the famous Article 33, which gives the Federal Government the right "to expel from the Republic forthwith, and without judicial process, any foreigner whose presence the Executive may deem inexpedient." Many an American has been "thirty-threed," as the slang expression goes in the foreign colony in Mexico City.

But Archbishop Ruiz was not a foreigner. It was alleged that he was a representative of a foreign country, Vatican State, which had just insulted and attacked Mexican sovereignty. But he was not a *Nuncio*; that is, a diplomatic representative of the Pope to the Government; and international law has never held that even a Nuncio of the Pope loses his own nationality. He was an Apostolic Delegate, that is, an appointee of the Pope to deal with the purely internal spiritual affairs of the Church, particularly the relations of priests with their Bishops according to Canon Law.

Thus, he was a Mexican citizen, and the Constitution forbids the penalty of exile to be applied to any Mexican citizen. Moreover, when General Calles had been President, he had decreed that under Article 130 only a Mexican could be representative of the supreme government of any church; and at the time of the settlement President Portes Gil had agreed to allow such a representative in Mexico, but demanded that he be a Mexican, to which the Holy See had agreed by the appointment of Archbishop Ruiz.

In spite of all this the Delegate remained in exile, and a new era of religious strife was dawning in Mexico.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A RIVALRY

ONE ASPECT of the Church's life was much discussed during all these years, and in the minds of some it was much more fundamental to the dispute than any quarrel over the number of priests, the rights of private education, or the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church in Mexico. In this interlude between two eras, it will be well to examine into it.

The Revolution, like most other Revolutions, had begun as a political revolt; it was against the long-held tenure of office by one man, Porfirio Diaz. This revolt was led by Madero, and for three years there was no sign in Mexico of any open antagonism toward the Church. In fact, under Madero there was actually a Catholic party, so called openly, which elected a number of Deputies to Congress, in what some have called "the only free election in the history of Mexico." The slogan of this first part of the Revolution in Mexico was the famous "Honest Suffrage. No re-election."

When Carranza, however, finally won out with his party, and the Constitutional Convention of Querétaro was held, the Revolution definitely became a social revolt. The aims of this social revolution, thereafter simply called "The Revolution," were set forth in the ensuing Constitution.

Now I have never subscribed to the thesis that this Revolution was a Communist one. Certain features of it, of course, were extremely radical, and could easily be used to bring about a large measure of collectivization. For its being directed from Moscow, however, there is no proof that I have ever been able to find, and besides, such a thing was very unlikely in Mexico. The Revolutionists were too entirely nationalistic and personal in their aims to



submit to orders from any foreign country.

For a time, it is true, a Russian Ambassador was in Mexico City in the person of the notorious Mme. Kollontai. She was a little too open in her propaganda to suit a dictator like Calles, however, and she was given her papers after a short and stormy career. From time to time also, Mexican politicians, temporarily out of favor at home, have gone to Europe, and eventually word came that they had included Moscow in their itinerary. Colonel Tejeda certainly played with the notion of bringing Bolshevism into the country, but in the election in which General Cárdenas was elected he was snowed under completely. About that time, too, large numbers of Communist agitators were carted off to the Islas Marias, Mexico's penal colony in the Pacific. Mexico was a sad disappointment to Stalin, if he had ever thought of conquering it under Calles.

Moreover, as I have shown, General Calles in later years became the largest and wealthiest capitalist in Mexico, with several large haciendas to his credit, and a share in most of Mexico's staple monopolies. There was little chance of his buckling under to any foreign dictation like that of Moscow, which, in its almost puritanical fanaticism, demands of its adepts a severe personal practice of its precepts in all their purity. Later, in his struggle with Cárdenas, in which he was to lose out finally, Calles made this more than clear.

Nevertheless the Mexican Revolution was in its principles a genuine social upheaval, based on radical concepts which are sometimes inaccurately called Socialism, but which, if they were that, were Socialism of a peculiarly Mexican character. The principal of these were the labor and agrarian policies adopted, and it happens that the Government, in its opposition to the Church, always in the beginning entirely disavowed any opposition to the Church as a religion, and based it entirely on the supposed antagonism of the Catholic Bishops to the social reforms proposed by the Revolution.

It is in order, then, in this study of the Mexican Church from within, to discover the facts in this respect also.

The fundamental fact, of course, is the make-up of the Mexican people itself. It is not a country of fairly comfortable middle-class city people and workers, or of landed farmers, more or less comfortable, as in the United States. Neither is there any political consciousness to speak of; that was pretty effectively impeded under Diaz, and the new revolution has attracted followings of persons rather than of policies. Moreover, the bulk of the population is Indian or with Indian blood, a large part of it with little or no education, and most of it desperately poor. These last two circumstances of illiteracy and poverty are the heritage of sixty years of nineteenth-century internecine war and of the liberal,

laissez-faire policy of the Diaz regime, with its inevitable concentration of wealth in a few hands, followed by twenty years of more civil war.

Side by side with the Indian population is a much smaller class, white or mestizo, of high intelligence and excellent breeding and education. From these alone can come the leaders. The Indians of the fields and villages are too indifferent to any movement of ideas to form a following, except in their own immediate, local interest. The situation is ideal for an individual or group dictatorship. In fact, no other form of government is conceivable.

In religion, there is no doubt that the poorer classes are thoroughly Catholic, in an instinctive, but none the less real sense. Years of civil war, of course, have not been favorable to its exercise, especially in remote regions where few priests were allowed to live, or could live, if they were allowed. Elsewhere, in town and city, among the more educated, there is a fine, high type of practical religion.

Now I must here confess that for some time I was inclined to wonder if the Church had not been remiss in agitating for social reform, and if thus it had not brought the storm on its head by its negligence.

What I discovered was an amazingly forgotten chapter in the history of Mexico. It was fairly recent history, too, but was buried under the storm of polemics.

The little Catholic labor movement I had witnessed in an attic gave me a clue to the story. I found out later that this group was merely a resurrected corpse of quite a flourishing body of former times, the *Confederación Nacional Católica de Trabajo*, which in 1923 had a total paid membership of 30,000, and of course innumerable other followers among workers in urban centers.

A distinct feature of this movement was the affiliated body of women workers. In 1921, several Catholic organizers had begun to unite the women workers in various factories of Mexico City, especially the many textile and cigarette works. In a short time 5,000 women were organized in these Catholic labor unions in more than 15 factories in the capital, besides factories in other places. Free schools for the children of these workers were established, along with adult night schools; a cooperative purchasing guild for them was set up, credit unions put on foot to save the workers from the 40 to 50 per cent loans offered by loan sharks; and cooperative eating clubs maintained. A savings bank was also established, in which more than 100,000 pesos belonging to workers was deposited.

In 1926 this whole flourishing woman movement was destroyed at one blow. In August of that year all workers were ordered to march in the anti-Church procession in the Capital. Many members refused. Their bank was confiscated; coercion was exerted on employers to discharge their skilled

employees who refused to become members of the CROM; soldiers were placed in the entrance of factories taking the names of workers as they entered and forcing them to join the radical unions or hiring others who came and offered to join. In the case of one textile factory, 800 skilled women workers refused to join, and the Government supplied the factory with others, who being without any training quickly brought that particular company to bankruptcy.

This enterprise, however, led me to inquire into its antecedents.

I found that the trail led me back to 1903. In that year the first Catholic Congress was held in Puebla from February 20 to March 1. It was the opening gun in the social program of the Church along modern lines, and Dr. Charles S. Macfarland, General Secretary Emeritus of the Federal Council of Churches, who independently made the same investigations, speaking of 1913, reminds us "in all honesty" that "the movement for real social Christianity in the United States did not begin very much earlier than these procedures of the Catholic Church in Mexico."<sup>1</sup>

The second Congress was held in Morelia, in 1904, and the third in Guadalajara in 1906.

The result of these Congresses had been a great efflorescence of social action throughout the Republic. Anti-alcohol leagues were formed; circles for workmen were established, with unemployment insurance funds and insurance against accidents and old age; the Raiffeisen rural banks were introduced into Mexico; and other credit unions in many places.

Following this, "Social Weeks" were held in Guadalajara, Tulancingo, Zamora, Puebla, and Mexico City. In these, imitating the European plan still so successful in France, all kinds of social problems were discussed and new plans undertaken. The only real problem was old Don Porfirio Diaz himself.

In his old age, Diaz had a fixed obsession against stirring things up, or, as he put it, "agitating the masses." He particularly objected to having this done by the Catholic Church. After all, he was an old revolutionist himself, with all the prejudices of the time of Juarez. The politicians with whom he surrounded himself, if they had any religion, were positivists of the school of Comte. Little by little, beginning from scratch after the great confiscations of the time of Comonfort in 1856, the Church had begun to extend its work, particularly in education. The laws were all on the books, of course, and every now and then Diaz applied them, just to show the Church that it should not go too far. Thus he kept it in a bondage that allowed it to do a certain amount of good, but not too much. Later polemics have made it appear that during this period—1880 to 1910—the Church had been in control. The first one to smile at this would have been the agnostic old dictator himself. The historical records would bear him out.

An incident that was related to me by Archbishop Ruiz about him illustrates this well-known fact. A brother of Archbishop Plancarte, who belonged to one of Mexico's wealthy families, left in his will a considerable amount of money for a Catholic educational foundation. As trustees of the fund he named his brother, and two other Bishops, among whom was the then Bishop Ruiz. When the will was probated, however, the Procurator of the Republic refused to allow the bequest. Whereupon appeal was made by the Bishops to the President.

Don Porfirio replied to them: "You know that I do not interfere with the purely spiritual government of the Church. But I let you know flatly that I have no intention of allowing the Church to secure any such power as is contained even in this moderate bequest."

His word was final, and the bequest was annulled.

Shackled as it was, however, this social movement had made great intellectual progress. Under Diaz little organization was possible. When he went, however, and to carry out its purposes, several great national societies were founded. In 1912, Father Carlos Maria de Heredia, S.J., well known later to many in the United States, founded the "*Damas Católicas*—The Catholic Women," whose purpose was especially a social one. In that interlude of comparative peace, tremendous activity was set on foot: schools of arts and crafts, orphanages, recreation centers, rural banks, houses of regeneration for women, and many other local activities.

At this time Father Bernard Bergoend, S.J., founded the *Asociación Cristiana de Jovenes Mexicanos*, the young men's society, which has written a glorious page in Catholic history. Later, in the dark days of 1926, it was the heart of the Catholic resistance. At a time when fear gripped the souls of many, the young men of the A. C. J. M. were in the forefront of the struggle for religious liberty and more than 140 of them laid down their lives for it.

For years, too, there had already been other social group activities, such as the men's Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which has always since 1833 been the form of social action peculiar to the Catholic Church, and the Sodalties of the Blessed Virgin, which followed the Spanish plan of that religious society in branching out into many forms of social action. The members of these societies formed a nucleus for the new, more open, forms of social action and agitation that followed the downfall of Diaz.

Under this dictator, moreover, nothing could be done to solve the greater problems of labor and the land in a fundamental, national way. All that could be done was to agitate and to form the consciences of Catholics for action when the time was ripe. For this purpose, a string of periodicals had been founded: *La Democracia Cristiana*, of Tulancingo; *Restauracion Social* and *Archivo Social*

in Guadalajara; *La Paz Social* and *Acción y Fe* in Mexico City. To crown this was the great Catholic daily, *El Pais*, edited by the social-minded Don Trinidad Sanchez Santos, and reaching even in Diaz' time the large circulation of 200,000. There were also Catholic dailies in Guadalajara and Puebla.

Once Diaz was gone, however, the outlook for social-minded Catholics looked brighter. Already, as if in preparation for this, had been founded in the Capital the *Circulo Católico Nacional*, whose purpose was to unite in one program-making center all the various activities on foot everywhere. When Madero came in 1910, the time looked ripe to translate into action and law the social program. In 1911 the *Circulo* transformed itself into the Catholic party, a new political organization which immediately put out candidates for Congress. In Mexico's "only honest election" it actually sent a compact group to the Camera which soon signalized itself by proposing a string of social reforms. What these were will be told presently. In Guadalajara, however, the Catholic party secured a majority in the State legislature and actually put the program into law.

Meanwhile the agrarian question had been thoroughly studied. It was obvious from the first that the heart of the question was the *latifundia*, the concentration of enormous landed properties into a few hands. This had taken on an enormous impetus under Diaz, who had proved false to his Indian heritage by seizing the common lands of the Indians, the *ejidos*, and dividing them among his political followers. The economic results of this concentration were undoubtedly good, but the position of the peons who lived on them was contrary to all human dignity. As in the United States South under slavery, of course, there were *hacendados* in Mexico who were humane and social-minded, and there were others who were mere exploiters. But in either case the situation of the peons was an attack on human liberty.

Under Diaz, therefore, little could be done to change this situation, and so the social action of the Church could be one of palliation only. This was directed principally at the housing problem, family life and health, and the securing to peons of a minimum at least of economic liberty by extending the owning of private property through rural loan banks on the Raiffeisen plan. The center of this rural social work seems to have been Tulancingo, a great cotton center, and its inspirer was the Bishop, Monsignor Mora y del Rio, later Archbishop of Mexico City, who must have had bitter thoughts when he was exiled in 1927 because of his supposed opposition to social reform.

Under his direction, a lawyer, Don Refugio Galindo, founded the "*Operarios Guadalupanos*—the Workers of Guadalupe," which quickly spread all over the Republic. To further the work, centers of study were established, to

interest the intellectuals in the plight of the peon, and to form an élite who would be the executives of the work itself among the agricultural workers. It was of this movement that *La Democracia Cristiana* was the organ. As a result various agricultural congresses were held at Tulancingo and at Zamora, whose Auxiliary Bishop, Dr. José de J. Fernandez, was also a leader in the movement.

The climax of all this work was the great Diet of Zamora, as it was called. This was held in 1913, and its result was the adoption of a program of social action which united in itself all the Catholic social thought of the two generations that had passed since Leo XIII's Encyclical, "Rerum Novarum," from which it had derived its inspiration. This program was printed by Dr. Charles S. Macfarland in his "Chaos in Mexico" with high praise for its almost radical nature, and for its author, Father Alfredo Mendez Medina, S.J., whom he knows personally.

It is worth while summing up here its principal demands, many of which would be considered radical even today:

A minimum wage set up by a professional council, and "adequate to the needs of an adult worker under normal living conditions";

Suppression of the labor of married women and of children, and regulation of the conditions of health, morality, and safety of unmarried women workers;

Acquisition of a family property, unseizable and indivisible: rural holdings, urban habitations, and the shop of the artizan;

Unemployment, accident, sickness, and old-age insurance;

Profit-sharing, and even part-ownership, of the company in which one works, by a series of easy payments;

Obligatory arbitration councils for labor disputes;

Suppression of stock jobbing, stock gambling, and speculation;

Protection of the white-collar class by independent unions of employes, including Government servants;

Protection of the conditions of domestic employment by offices of assistance, giving professional help where necessary;

Professional corporations to give legal assistance to workers in courts and executive bureaus;

Gradual return, by legitimate reimbursement to owners, of the land to the farm workers.

By a curious coincidence, if it was one, this program found itself incorporated almost wholly in Article 123 of the 1917 Constitution. It is one of Mexico's tragedies that the Church was not allowed to cooperate in its fulfillment, which it would have been only too glad to do. Dr. Macfarland, who remarks that social thought in Mexican Catholic circles was ahead of similar

religious circles in the United States, concludes that "both the State and the Church had been stimulated in the interest of social justice more or less simultaneously." He overlooks the fact that in 1903, when the Church's program began, Porfirio Diaz would have none of it, and that the present State in Mexico dates only from 1917.

My purpose, however, in detailing this program and its history at some length is not controversial. It is to list it, in accord with the plan of this book, among the catastrophes suffered by both the Church and Mexico since the Revolution. I cannot pass it by, however, without expressing my amazement at this social record of the Church in Mexico, and confessing my shame that I did not realize its full extent until I began to assemble my notes and references for this book. Its importance is not diminished by the fact that circumstances forced it to remain in great part on paper.

The Revolution put the Church into a difficult position on the question of social reform. It is true that the clergy were far ahead of many of the flock, particularly the wealthy ones, in social thought, but they had many followers, especially among the young people and university students. But the fact was that it was the clergy, including the Bishops, which held these advanced positions not very different from those of the Revolution, and it was particularly the clergy against which the Revolution fulminated. It was the sign rather of a bitter rivalry for reform than of anything else—a fact that polemics have obscured.

The result was that the Church became almost wholly taken up with its problem of self-existence. Every social institution it had set up was swept away at one blow. It was in vain that spokesmen for the Church insisted on the social thought of the Church, and its willingness to cooperate with the Government along these lines. Their voices were drowned in the general clamor, and people outside of Mexico never even knew that the Church's social thought was what it was, or that it had any.

In Mexico, the Church was represented as being opposed to social reform. This was rather puzzling. Of course, those Catholics who had profited financially by the Diaz regime were known to be opposed to any reform, but the record of the Church itself was clear. It was an ally of the Government against the exploiters and large landowners, had the Government only seen it. That is what was meant by the statement of the prominent Mexican clergyman, which I quoted in an earlier chapter, to the effect that Calles would have been Mexico's greatest President if only he had not embarked on the religious persecution. The only record I can find of the Church's opposition to the Government's policy of social reform concerns the land question. Here, it is true, many Bishops spoke out in condemnation, but this had to do with the system of practical confiscation

by giving worthless bonds in exchange for lands taken. That had to be condemned on the fundamental principles of Christianity. There have not been many Bishops in the last forty years who belonged to the landowning class. Most of them were men of the people.

In any case, the Church has often offered to cooperate with the Government in social reform. To advance this story a bit, I merely record the latest offer made by the Mexican Bishops in their Pastoral on Social Action, issued in August, 1935. It is practically identical with the challenge which I made at the Institute of Human Relations at Williamstown during the same month.

"In view of the fact," say the Bishops, "that it is important that no time be lost and that the [social] problem be made no more difficult, therefore, *forgetting everything that has gone before*, and with the most sincere desire that, insofar as it lies in us, there be found promptly a solution of social problems, we are ready to assist in it effectively and energetically, both personally and through our clergy, through the Catholic organizations and all the Faithful of the Republic."

They make only one condition.

"We point out, however, that to this end it is indispensable that the Church as a Church, and that Catholics in general, enjoy true and just liberty, the lack of which for many years has resulted in injury not only to the Church, but also to the Nation."

And there I will leave it, for I must hurry on to more dreadful days yet that were impending for the Church in Mexico.

NOTE: The facts related in this chapter have been taken from the excellent, if belated, study of José Castillo y Piña, "Cuestiones Sociales," Mexico City, 1934; and the Mexican Bishops' Pastoral on Social Action, Mexico, August 30, 1935.



## CHAPTER XVII

### "THERE IS NO GOD"

SOONER OR LATER every Revolution gets around to the schools. The very first thing that the Communists did in Russia was to capture the schools, for they realized that they had no hope of converting the older people, especially in the country; but they could fashion the minds of youth so that they would never know anything different from what was taught them by the Communist party. The same thing was done by Mussolini in Italy, and by Hitler in Germany. It is a necessary part of every Revolution, if it is to be permanent.

It is curious that this did not dawn upon the Mexican Revolution until very late. Any Catholic school found operating as such before 1934 was closed, but this merely had the effect of putting thousands of children out on the streets without any schooling whatever. The three successive Presidents who filled out the unexpired term of General Obregon each put large sums of money into the budget for education; but a budget is one thing and an appropriation is another. Mexican Catholics claimed that very little was actually appropriated, except for certain "show places" in and near the Capital and other large centers.

There is good evidence for this from unbiased sources. Calles himself in an interview with Ezequiel Padilla in 1932, published in *Excelsior* in Mexico City, said that "after eight years, nothing has been done." During the later months of General Rodriguez's term, in 1934, money was lacking even for the payment of teachers' salaries. In the Juchiteca district of Oaxaca, for instance, 5,000 school children were turned out because the teachers refused to work any longer after months of no pay. The same thing happened all over the country, even in Mexico City.

Finally, in July, 1934, General Calles, still Mexico's dictator, took notice of the whole situation. In a famous speech at Guadalajara, he announced a new program:

"The Revolution, closing ranks, has dominated and has led and will lead the destinies of the country at any cost. . . . However, the Revolution has not ended. The eternal enemies lie in wait and attempt to make its policies ineffectual. It is necessary that we enter into a new phase of the Revolution which I shall call the psychological revolutionary period; we must enter into and take possession of the minds of the children, the consciences of the young, because they do belong and should belong to the Revolution.

"It is absolutely necessary to drive the enemy out of that entrenchment where the clergy has been, where the conservatives have been—I refer to education, I refer to the school. . . . Unfortunately, the school in many States of the Republic, and even in the Capital, has been directed by clerical and reactionary elements."

This tribute, be it said in passing, to the educational effort of the Church fell strangely on the ears of those who had been accustomed to saying that the Church had neglected its duty of educating the young. Illiteracy, as all admit, is appallingly high in Mexico. Calles himself paid an unwitting tribute to the effort of the Church to abate it, though he knew as well as anybody else that the State had had the supreme responsibility of educating the young, not only since Carranza's time, but long before, under Diaz. The whole burden of his accusation was that this educational effort of the Church had been illegal from the start.

But General Calles went on to expound his own philosophy:

"The reactionaries say and the clericals say that the child belongs to the home and the youth to the family; this is a selfish doctrine, since the child and the youth belong to the community, to the collectivity, and it is the Revolution that has the obligation of doing away with prejudices and developing the new national soul. . . . For this reason I call upon all Governors throughout the Republic, on all public authorities, and on all Revolutionary elements to proceed at once to the field of battle which we must make, because the child and the youth must belong to the Revolution."

It was this speech that Ambassador Daniels unwittingly praised a week or two later, under the impression, as was later explained, that General Calles had been speaking of the necessity of public education, and not knowing that he had been expounding a new orientation of the Mexican Revolutionary party.

What had finally opened the eyes of Calles to the danger was a series of incidents that had happened some months before.

The then Secretary of Education, one Narciso Bassols, one of his own

favorites, had introduced into the public schools a system of sexual education for all children. This system had been long in vogue in Tabasco, where a whole generation of young people had been brought up without any religion at all because there were no priests in that State; and it had just recently been introduced into Vera Cruz by Colonel Tejeda.

Just why it was introduced under Federal auspices in the whole country is not very clear. It is too much to think that the purpose was to corrupt the children, though that charge was made. It may have had a political purpose, to divert people's attention from other troubles. It may have been, and probably was, just stupid doctrinaire theory, under the impression that such a thing was "modern." Whatever was the aim, it was a political blunder of the first water.

The system was carried out in the most extreme fashion, along the Tabasco model. What happened is well authenticated. Children were taken to stockyards to see the coupling of animals. They were taken into maternity wards to witness parturition. They were undressed in schools of both sexes and had explained to them the process of copulation. One teacher put on a school dance in which all the boys and girls were unclothed. Other, and unprintable, things occurred.

The result was a storm of indignation all over the country. Even a milder form of sexual instruction en masse would have caused a commotion in a country like Mexico, with its Spanish traditions. It was widely looked upon as a direct blow at the family, and a non-sectarian organization, the Union of Fathers of Families, directed by prominent professional men and educators, started an agitation beginning with a "plebiscite" by the people themselves. In a week or two there were 80,000 votes against and only 75 for the program; that proportion prevailed to the end. In a circular distributed to 3,000 public and Catholic schools and societies in the country the plan was attacked. The result was that orderly demonstrations took place everywhere, and sometimes when there was an attempt to break them up by the police, there were riots. In more than one case a mother or the community killed the teacher who had imparted the instruction. Legal protests were put forth also in the form of petitions of grievances.

In May, 1934, Bassols, who had once been known as a good Catholic but who was now dubbed "Minister of Prostitution," was forced to resign. He was moved to another Department.

The other incidents concerned academic freedom in the University.

This University, contrary to what has sometimes been asserted, is not the successor of the old "Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico," founded in 1553. This had been destroyed by the revolutionist Gomez Farias, in the nineteenth century. The present one was founded by Justo Sierra, Minister of

Education in Porfirio Diaz' cabinet, during the later years of that dictator's regime. Its teaching was positivistic, modeled after the system of Comte.

From the beginning, it has been financially supported by the Government, but was officially "autonomous," meaning that its ideology was not to be imposed by any governmental philosophy. Various attempts had been made to destroy this autonomy, or, as we should call it, academic liberty, but they always resulted in student riots and surrender by the Government.

Bassols, as Minister of Education, in 1932 and 1933 made a new attempt to do away with its freedom of teaching. The new ideology was to be entirely left wing, under the leadership of Vicente Lombardo Toledano, who had adopted the Marxist "criterion." In his paper, *El Futuro*, he announced his plans, and he secured Bassols' support, and that of a certain number among the faculty and students.

The students, however, for the largest part, again rose up en masse, as they had always done. Class strikes, met with violence, turned to rioting. The Faculty of Law resigned in a body. Meanwhile, Lombardo Toledano was made Rector of the University Preparatory School, with the approval of the President. More riots. He was expelled by the students from the post. As usual, attempts were made to blame the Church, but the Students' Federation of the University squelched that by pointing out that their candidate for Rector had been Diaz Soto y Gama, "a sincere revolutionary." The movement was simply what would have occurred in any university in the world when academic liberty was menaced by any Government. The troubles calmed temporarily by the appointment of Manuel Gomez Morin to the Rectorship of the University, pledged to freedom.

During 1934, attempts were made to impose the Government's educational theories on the other Universities in the country, Monterey, Guadalajara, and others. In Guadalajara, all the students went out on strike, and the Governor of the State closed the University altogether. A students' demonstration was brutally put down, nine of them being killed by the soldiers who fired on them. Later, when he thought he had things in hand, and opened it again, of the 800 students who had formerly attended only 179 returned, mostly sons of Government employes. The rest of the students announced they would give up their professions for the time rather than submit to Government dictation in the curriculum and in the doctrines taught under its compulsion.

These vivid demonstrations of the temper of the people were not lost on the Government. The Church was blamed for organizing them, but, though it had naturally joined the protest, the movement had been a genuinely national one, without regard to any religious issue. But the lesson was that the Revolution did not have "possession of the minds of youth," or even of their parents. That is

why the new educational drive was begun, which was intended to finish forever any intellectual opposition to the Revolution.

It began by amending the Constitution. General Cárdenas was elected in July, 1934, on a program of the Six-Year Plan, elaborated by General Calles. An integral part of this plan was to be an amendment abolishing all private schools of whatever character, and imposing a Socialistic curriculum on all schools. The Union of Fathers of Families took issue with this plan also, and on October 12, 1934, Columbus Day, a demonstration of 10,000 people assembled in perfect quiet in the Alameda in Mexico City in protest. The police attacked the crowd with tear-gas bombs, and mounted guards rode into it swinging clubs and pistol butts. More than a hundred injured men, women, and children were taken up by ambulances, and many others treated in private homes.

Two weeks later, the Government ordered out all its employees in a counter-demonstration, bringing many in from the country. It was estimated that 200,000 marched. It turned, however, instead, into a series of wild protests as group after group passed President Rodriguez demanding redress of one kind or another. One group would go by shouting, "Death to the Catholics!" to be followed by another shouting, "Death to Calles, owner of sugar properties!" The school teachers carried banners demanding unpaid salaries, and so on. Many employees resigned rather than march.

In spite of this, the Amendment of Article 3 went through. On September 26 it was introduced, and on November 28 it was announced that the required two-thirds of the State legislatures had ratified it. On December 1, 1934, General Cárdenas was inaugurated and promised to put it into effect immediately.

On [page 126](#) I have given the earlier form of his article. Its new form was much longer, too long to quote here. In its first section it imposed "Socialistic education," excluding "all religious doctrines, fanaticism, and prejudices." Its second section made all private schools unconstitutional, of whatever kind, but this is modified in a second paragraph which allows the authorities to grant permission for private schools, provided they teach Socialism.

Thus the third phase of the conflict opened: the capture of intellects.

It was the death knell for the Church. With its churches empty of worship for a great majority of the population, it had managed to carry on numerous schools, mostly taught by Religious living in lay garb. Through these and through Catechism in the authorized churches, it had imparted religion to many thousands of children. The Catechism classes had been stopped by violence, and now the private schools were to go, for obviously they could not teach what was demanded of them. Already, as I have said, some of them had been closed because of their refusal to teach sexual education as it was interpreted.

Now just what the Socialism was that had to be taught was at first a great puzzle to inquirers. Even the new Secretary of Education, Ignacio Garcia Tellez, did not know, apparently, though he did say on more than one occasion that it was to prepare the children for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Dr. Charles S. Macfarland, who was in Mexico about that time, found as many explanations as there were school directors, and in practice he found an education ranging all the way from Marxism unalloyed to a mild social-reform theory.

Later, however, doubt was dispelled. At the national Congress of teachers held in Mexico City during December, 1935, special pains were taken to put the new educational theory in precise terms. Here is the resolution that was adopted:

1. The *purposes* of revolutionary education, in accord with the ruling regime, are:

- a. To inculcate and nourish the sentiment of the class struggle among the exploited classes;
- b. To prepare the pupils technically and culturally to train for the struggles of workers for a recovery of their economic, political, and cultural rights;
- c. To fight for the entire recapture of the land by the country people, until the absolute extinction of the *latifundia* is attained;
- d. To combat the clerical and Fascist reaction which is opposed to the progress of the country;
- e. To fight for the liberation of the oppressed native nationalities;
- f. To fight against all imperialist oppression, in all of its manifestations, until the total independence of the country is won.

2. The *revolutionary action* of the teacher *within* the school will be:

- a. To explain the phenomena of nature in strictly scientific form, abandoning any dogmatic position;
- b. To explain social phenomena and in particular the organization of the capitalist regime, by means of historical materialism, and in general, of the philosophy of the proletariat;
- c. To establish a strict relation between school activities and the struggle of the workers for their immediate freedom.

3. The *revolutionary action* of the teacher *outside* the school will be:

- a. To preserve solidarity with all movements of the workers' struggles;
- b. To fight for the unification of the industrial masses and the rural workers on a definite program of revolutionary struggle;
- c. To direct and implement the workers to make them capable of carrying on their struggle for emancipation.

This is clear enough. It is interesting, to advance the story a bit, to note that it was not until this clear statement of the Marxist meaning of the new Amendment that the Bishops took any stringent action, as we shall see, in the following January.

Meanwhile, a veritable series of thunderclaps had fallen on the country. Every private school was sought out, and a promise exacted that it would teach Socialistic education, as the local authorities interpreted it, which was usually radically.

In Monterey, on one single day, 27 schools were closed and 5,558 children let out of school, with no other school to attend. In Chilapa 10 schools were dissolved, in Leon 70, in Guadalajara 86, and so on, with a proportionate number of children. Nobody knows how many schools were closed, but they run into the hundreds and the number of children who are left without schooling into many tens of thousands.

The Government itself must have been astounded to learn how enormous had been the secret educational work of the Church during the past few years. It was faced with an insoluble problem. Teachers for these children were absolutely non-existent. And in many States, as in Nayarit, for instance, boys and girls with only two or three years of schooling were put in charge of classes. The buildings, of course, were there. There were dozens of fine modern schools belonging to the nuns which were taken. They are now being photographed and the pictures sent abroad to show what the Government is doing to build schools.

For the teachers in the public schools the problem was of another kind. The largest number of them were Catholics. They were forced to take an oath, of which this, from Yucatan, is a fair sample:

"In the presence of the Federal Board of Education, I . . . , declare that I unconditionally accept the program of the Socialistic school and that I will make it known and will defend it;

"I declare that I am an atheist, an irreconcilable enemy of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion, that I will endeavor to destroy it, detaching consciences from the bonds of any religious worship, and that I am ready to fight against the clergy anywhere and wherever it will be necessary."

Similar pledges were imposed on the teachers of the States of Hidalgo, Michoacan, Guanajuato, etc.

Obviously this pledge immediately weeded out from the public schools all who professed any religion. Large numbers immediately left their employment rather than sign it. In Leon, in the State of Guanajuato, out of 105 public-school teachers, 85 refused to sign the pledge. In the rural schools of the same State less than 15 per cent of the teachers signed it. In Aguascalientes very few signed it,

and those who lost their positions gave their free time teaching in the home schools; some opened up small shops, cigarette stands, candy or fruit booths. In Guadalajara so many refused that apparently it was decided to let them alone, in view of the known temper of that city. In Colima, according to official reports, the whole body of teachers refused and went on strike.

The resistance of the parents was more positive. The National Union of Parents of Families took the lead in the struggle with petitions to the Government, parades of protest, and finally, when the private schools were closed, with strikes, with refusal to send their children to school. In many places, for example at Totatiche, in Jalisco, the troops paraded the villages and farms with the announcement that parents refusing to send their children to the public schools would be treated as rebels. In Lagos, in Jalisco, parents who refused were arrested and forced to sweep the streets of the city, and one in Morelia was kept in a freezing tub of water until he was near death. In Cholula, in the State of Puebla, parents held a meeting of protest and 500 of them were rounded up by the police.

An incident in Huejucar, in Jalisco, was typical. The public school was empty. The Federal inspector of education came and called a meeting of parents, all simple peasants. One man, whose name was Claro, rose and said that he was like his name ("clear"), and they did not send their children to school because they did not want Socialistic education, and as long as the Government tried to impose it on them they would be on strike. When the Inspector undertook to show them that it was not bad, and that they were under the influence of the priests, another, by name Alejandro Banuelos, cut him short by telling him that if he stayed around much longer he would be stoned. The Inspector left hurriedly and was seen no more in that place.

In one place a more bizarre incident is recorded. The teacher, a substitute for one who had resigned, came into the schoolroom one morning naked from the waist up, because, she said, she was going to give the children a lesson in sexual education. One small boy darted out of the room and went running around the town shouting that the teacher was in school naked. The townspeople gathered with sticks and stones, and with the mayor, who was visiting the school, the teachers made their way to the roof on hearing the mob approach. So the good people, "to punish them," took turns guarding the school and kept the mayor and his teachers two days and two nights up there without food or shelter. This happened in the year 1935 at Ojuelos, in the State of Aguascalientes.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### KALEIDOSCOPE

IN DECEMBER, 1934, the Capital beheld the strangest incursion the old city had experienced in all its thousand years of existence. From the State of Tabasco came its Governor, Tomas Garrido Canabal, to be Minister of Agriculture in the Cabinet of President Cárdenas.

This Garrido had long been known as a highly original leader of a mixture of Socialism, fanatical anti-religion, and expert showmanship. He had so thoroughly organized his State for ten years that he boasted that the name of God had been forgotten and that no priest could live there. Practically no young people in their teens knew anything but what he had taught them. He had organized burnings of religious books, destruction of all works of art depicting sacred things or persons, and anti-God parades. He even published a well-printed booklet about all this, with pictures of how it was done. This he distributed widely in Mexico City as a harbinger of his coming.

The "Scourge of Tabasco," as George Creel called him in an article in *Collier's* for February 23, 1935, found in Mexico City a man to whom he once owed his life. During the short time that Archbishop Diaz had held his See of Tabasco, the young Garrido had become involved in a political tempest which resulted in his enemies seeking his life. He fled for safety—to the Episcopal Palace. Bishop Diaz received him and his three companions, hid them, fed them, and turned away the pursuers. Then, in the dead of night, he saw them on the way to safety. Shortly after that, Garrido was on top again and passed his law ordering all priests to marry. When Bishop Diaz refused, he expelled him forcibly from the State.

He preached a violent Socialism. How he practised it is an interesting part of his story. He forced the banana growers into cooperatives and concentrated the cooperatives. But he also incorporated a company, which he himself owned, through which the cooperatives had to market their product. Thus he killed two birds with one stone: he possessed an advanced cooperative system to be admired by visiting social thinkers, and he became himself a millionaire. He was, in short, like his master, Calles, a Fascist. Incidentally, as part of the show, he called one of his sons Lenin, and the other Lucifer.

Before the startled eyes of the populace of Mexico City he marched into town at the head of his personal shock troops, the "*Rojinegros*—the Red Blacks," so called because the trousers and skirts of the boys and girls were black, and their shirts and blouses red. They were a well-trained and disciplined semi-military body, and Garrido promptly began to show the country how it was done.

Every week he held in the courtyard of the Department of Agriculture a Red Saturday. This was an auto-da-fe of religious articles and books which were burned to the accompaniment of dance and song. The houses and churches of the city and suburbs were forcibly entered for material for the weekly bonfire. The great prize was to be the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, but it was guarded day and night by volunteer Catholic young men, and was never captured.

Garrido also went into the publishing business. On the Government presses, he printed a magazine called, in mockery, *Cristo Rey*—Christ the King, filled with violent caricatures of God, the Pope, the Bishops and clergy. It was done with considerable skill for this kind of thing. Its inspiration was the school of Diego Rivera. On its masthead appeared the words, "Appears every Saturday, God willing or not." From the same presses poured a flood of postcards, leaflets, pamphlets, etc., all filled with venomous hatred of religion. One of these leaflets, which I have, is an incitation to children to hate their parents if they refuse to send them to the Socialist schools.

Then, he began to send his Tabascan Red Shirts around to the suburbs to make demonstrations. It was not long before one of these terminated in a tragedy. At Coyoacan, in the Federal District, sixty of them held a meeting on December 30, 1934, on a platform outside the church of the Immaculate Conception, while the Faithful were inside, hearing ten o'clock Mass. As these were leaving the church, the Red Shirts suddenly opened fire on them with revolvers and killed five and wounded many others. One of those killed was Maria de la Luz Camacho, who was very prominent as a catechist in Catholic Action. She died with her arms outstretched, and her last words were, "*Viva Cristo Rey*—Long live Christ the King."

After the shooting there was a moment of hesitation, and then with a cry of rage the unarmed crowd leaped at the assassins, who fled, armed as they were, and took refuge in the police station. One of them, not quick enough, was caught and ground to death under the feet of the crowd. The rest were imprisoned, but Garrido sent them a case of champagne to cheer them up. They were shortly afterward released, and nothing was done to them. The tumult, however, raged in the newspapers for days, but Garrido declared they were under his protection. The funeral of the Catholics killed was a triumph, with the Archbishop presiding, of 25,000 people.

Thus encouraged, the Red Shirts announced that they would put on another demonstration at Xochimilco, also a suburb, famous for its floating gardens, on January 6. The Xochimilcans, however, replied in the newspapers that they would be "waiting for them," and the Red Shirts decided not to go. Other suburbs imitated Xochimilco, and this kind of thing stopped for a time.

Meanwhile, after Coyoacan, the university students took a hand, and the Red Shirts met opposition wherever they went. On January 7, the students held a meeting calling for the head of Garrido, and then started out for the Red Shirts' headquarters. They were met with a hail of bullets from a Thompson gun, and many fell. From this time, however, the Red Shirts, met every time they appeared in public by threats from the students, seem to have confined their meetings to indoors.

Garrido, however, continued his fantastic activities until June, 1935, when he was forced out of the Government in the anti-Calles purge of that month engineered by the President. With his troop of Red Shirts, he went back to Tabasco, unmourned by the populace of the Capital. He was succeeded as Secretary of Agriculture by General Saturnino Cedillo, who promptly discovered and announced in the papers that Garrido had taken along with him 100,000 pesos belonging to his Department.

That was not quite the last of him, however. In Tabasco, he was shortly followed by a group of exiled Tabascans who went back under a Presidential guarantee to demand his expulsion from their State. One day as these were walking along a street with their leader, Rodolfo Brito Foucher, they were passed by an automobile with Senator Ausencio Cruz and others in it. Cruz opened fire on them with a "Tommy" gun, killing Brito's brother and two others. But that was too much. Under threats from Cárdenas, Garrido retired to Costa Rica, where he announced that he was making himself the agent for spreading the good news to all Latin America.

Garrido, however, seems to have gone to people's heads. All sorts of excesses filled this first half of the year 1935. General Saturnino Osornio in

Querétaro was a close imitator of his, until, under accusation of having murdered with his own hand a notorious gambler, he was arrested and held for trial. Generals Victorico Grajales in Chiapas, Guevara in Guerrero, Quevedo in Chihuahua, and other Governors, were of the same type. Meanwhile, President Cárdenas, who is himself somewhat of a Puritan, enraged the Callistas by closing up the Foreign Club, the gambling casino which they owned.<sup>1</sup> He also about this time closed up Tia Juana and "Caliente," much to the disgust of ex-President Rodriguez and some prominent Los Angeles people, who owned the concessions there.

The attack on religion took all sorts of bizarre forms. A favorite one was mimicking the Catholic Sacraments. Socialist baptisms were a fashion and all sorts of curious names were imposed on the unfortunate children. Socialist marriages were another. On May 15, 1934, before a red and black altar, on which was a life-size photograph of Garrido, two young Red Shirts, José Correa and Victoria Ley, pronounced their vows in presence of Garrido and employes of his Department: "Before society, before Comrade Tomas Garrido Canabal, and all present, we declare that we have united in matrimony by our express will."

There also lies before me a copy of an invitation to another marriage:

"J. Felix Gutierrez and Amalia González have the honor to invite you to the civil and Socialist matrimonial act, to take place at 21 o'clock the 17th of this month at 305 Gomez Farias Street. Please honor us with your presence. Guadalajara, August, 1935. WITHOUT GODS OR RELIGIONS."

We have heard how the children were taught to welcome their teacher in the morning with the salutation, "There is no God!" They still, however, said to her and to one another, *Adios*, the Spanish good-bye, which means "With God." When this was realized, they were ordered to be taught to say simply, "*salud*—health."

I have also a copy of the creed which was taught the children. It is the work of one Simón Antillón, "President of the Ejidal Commissariate of Matechic, in Chihuahua." It was published in one of Garrido's old magazines, *Izquierdas*, October 21, 1935: "I believe in Almighty Socialism . . . I believe in the Ejido . . . which descended to the miserable huts of the peasants, and sitteth at the right hand of General Cárdenas, the proletarian throne, and from thence shall come the division of the lands, which up to this have been in the hands of the Spaniards and creoles to the amount of 60%. I believe in the extinction of all religions inspired by the cowardice of mystical spirits . . ." and so on. Instead of Amen, there is *Tierra y Libertad*, the old device of Zapata, "Land and Liberty."

This was called "defanaticization." The campaign of defanaticization was declared the official policy of the Government, and the good Simón undoubtedly

sent his creed to Mexico City, confident that he would be rewarded. He was, by its publication in an official organ.

Sometimes the process went to extremes. Thus in one Government office, the "Bureau of Geography, Meteorology, and Hydrology," pictures of Christ, the Sacred Heart, and the Virgin of Guadalupe were spread on the floor in front of the table where the employes had to check in and out, so that they had to step on them each time they went in or out. The purpose of this, of course, was to clean out all Catholic employes from the office. The Red Shirts, however, went further. On Good Friday in 1935 in the Department itself they "celebrated" the death of Christ as "a malefactor."

Naturally, the radio was also used for the same purpose. I have before me a program of the "Anti-fanatic Hour" of the League against Religious Fanaticism over the Department of Education's Station, XEX. There are twelve parts to the anti-fanatic hour, one of which is a "Hymn to the Socialist School," and another an "Anti-alcoholic Protest," a song. There are six speeches, one of which is on "The Class Struggle." It will be remembered by some of my readers that about this time the Mexican Government bought time on an American chain, but the contract was canceled after a song during the first period which aroused wide protests which were aired in Congress in Washington.

The Department of Education was doing its part, too. I have a textbook by Germán List Arzubide called, "The Practice of Irreligious Education." It is obligatory reading for normal schools. Its motto is taken from Henri Barbusse: "God is the counter-revolution." It takes the reader from the beginning of the world to the present, interpreting everything from the point of view of "the new economic-social reform." Thus the Protestant Reformation is accounted for by the fact that "the representatives of the flourishing monetary-capitalist accumulations, strong in the cities, did not look with serenity on the business of the Roman Church selling Indulgences and using God for selling purposes." Thus again two birds are killed with one stone. The rest is in the same tone, about on the intellectual level of a typical Ku Klux Klansman turned Marxist.

The textbooks are inspired with the same spirit. I possess three elementary readers, which are official, in which all the excerpts are inspired with the prevailing tendencies, which are to carry out the policy as expressed in the new Article 3 of the Constitution: "to form the concept of solidarity necessary to bring about the progressive socialization of the means of economic production." The "orientation" of these books is threefold: hatred of the *patron*, the "Boss" (in a poem on "The Blood of the Sun": "would that this blood were the blood of the boss!"); of the army but not of the soldier ("peasant, worker, and soldier: three distinct persons, and one sole desire, a trinity nobler and more effective"—the

source is obvious, and also the suggestion); of the Church ("the peon had to yield or be robbed"). The author of one series of readers is José Muñoz Cota, Chief of the Bureau of Belles Lettres of the Department of Education. A group of mothers once appeared before the Secretary of Education and one of them said: "We do not want our sons to learn to despise us and to be turned into assassins."

The arts were also fanatically defanaticized. Here is where Diego Rivera came into his own. A Communist, he had been hired by bourgeois elements to do murals in Los Angeles, Detroit, and Rockefeller Center, and had left storms of protest behind him, only to come home to be taunted that he had worked for the bourgeois Ford and Rockefeller. In fact, he must himself have pondered on the meekness of millionaires. He had on his conscience the mural he had once put in the National Palace (it is still there) in which J. P. Morgan, Henry Ford, and John D. Rockefeller, Sr., are shown at a table filled with champagne bottles, with voluptuous belles lolling over them, and a maze of ticker tape surrounding their heads. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Henry Ford, no doubt, had never heard of this when they hired him.

Rivera, Orozco, and others conducted schools of revolutionary art under the auspices of the Department of Education. The purpose of these schools was to train muralists to decorate the walls of the public schools with revolutionary art. Quantities of these murals have been photographed and sent to the United States, for what purpose is not clear, for their motif is hatred of the capitalist system and of God, the Catholic Church, and all religion. The hammer and sickle are always prominent. In one school, "P. E. Calles" in Mexico City, school children are shown shooting at an excellent likeness of Archbishop Diaz and at other "enemies of the proletariat." In others God Himself and the Blessed Virgin are caricatured in the best Soviet fashion.

Writers were put to feverish composing of anti-religious plays. In at least one case on record, however, a show in Mexico City was a boomerang. Several boys secreted on themselves numbers of stink bombs, and at a particularly offensive passage in which children blasphemed God they let them loose, "amid indescribable confusion," as the papers say. To make it worse, the police locked the doors in order to catch the culprits, who filed demurely past them and were not caught. Only an old man of seventy was arrested, because he had on him a membership card of the Catholic League of Religious Defense.

During all this time when fanaticism was so fervently being suppressed the scene was made more hideous by a veritable epidemic of strikes. There was not an industry that was not paralyzed by stoppages, frequently with violence. It was estimated that 3,000 strikes took place during the first half of 1935. It was a time when Vicente Lombardo Toledano was organizing a union opposed to the

CROM, and one in which Communist doctrines were adopted. This Lombardo is an intellectual, and had been Director of the University Preparatory School, and it was he who had attempted to socialize the Universities. He turned his hand to the labor unions, and quickly had put the CROM in the shade. The strikes were his method of organizing, and it was alleged that he had the backing in this of the Cárdenas Government, to which he had promised support in turn. Indeed, this very charge was made against the President by Calles himself, in his famous interview in June, 1935.

Of course, during all this half-year of anti-fanaticism, the priests and Sisters were being pursued all over the Republic, but that will be told in its proper place.

The nightmare came to a climax in June, when General Calles gave his interview. Nobody knew why he had allowed President Cárdenas to go so far, but the favorite explanation of those who know Mexican politics was that Calles deliberately encouraged him to proceed on his way, knowing that soon he would bring the country to the verge of disruption, and then he would step in and throw him out. He had not wanted him in the first place, he wanted his own son, Rodolfo; but Cárdenas had been forced on him by Generals Cedillo and Almazan, the same who had conspired with Ortiz Rubio against him in 1928.

Nobody was surprised, then, when on June 12, Calles made a statement to a Congressional deputation which had called on him to "explain" certain recent contradictory happenings in the Chamber. The Chief Maximo of the Revolution, as he was called, was very bitter against the doings of the Government, and particularly so concerning developments in labor. He expressed the fear of Communism, as shown in the numerous strikes, and he pointed out that they were very bad for business, and therefore for the Government, which needed the taxes which had been lost. He ended by a significant reference to what had happened to Ortiz Rubio, hinting that the same thing would happen again, if he did not get his way. It was the first hint of a split between Calles and the President, and it was serious.

Cárdenas took it very coolly. He waited twenty-four hours, and with no open reference to Calles, he simply reminded the country that he was President. The next day, he summoned his Cabinet, in which there were several Calles men, including his son Rodolfo, and asked for its resignation. A few days later, he announced his new Cabinet, and all the Calles men were gone, Garrido along with them. Calles waited around a few days irresolutely, and then abruptly left for the United States, a beaten man. It was the first time he had been successfully defied since 1924. He had done at least one positive thing before he went; he had pointed out the definitely left-wing character of the Cárdenas Government, and aligned himself with the conservative, or Fascist, wing of the party.

While these changes were taking place in the Government of the country, the Church watched with anguish the turn of events. Of the two who were in conflict, there was little to choose for it: Calles was opposed to it with his bitter, personal hatred, Cárdenas was opposed to it on more general grounds, the Marxist principles which he had espoused. On the other hand, Garrido was gone, and that was a gain. His place was taken, it was thought significantly, by General Cedillo, who first as Governor and then as "strong man" of the State of San Luis Potosi had refused to enforce the anti-religious laws. As a consequence his State had become a refuge for fleeing priests and nuns, who were treated with consideration, if not with favor. During the wild six months of Garrido, the cries of his followers had been "Death to the Lord of San Luis!" as often as "Death to Catholics!"

For a time there was a lull, as Cárdenas seemed to be feeling out for friends, even among Catholics. While this happens, let us turn to the Church, to see its losses and gains during the period.



## CHAPTER XIX

### "DE PROFUNDIS"

HERE, THEN, was the Church confronted anew with the same old problem, which each time was a whole degree worse. It had always to begin all over again, as if nothing had taken place. After all, the Church still retained something as long as it could educate its young children in private schools with State toleration. Since Calles' Guadalajara speech, however, and the amendment of the Constitution, even that was taken away from it. Worse yet was to come later in 1935, but mercifully that was hidden for the present.

When sexual and Socialist education was made obligatory, even in those private schools which the Government might allow, all authorizations for all schools were taken away, and only those reopened which complied with a law constantly under the enforcement of an army of State and Federal inspectors.

Yet parents, in spite of all, had their schools. When they refused to send their children to the Socialist school, a whole system of clandestine schools sprang up. These "home schools" are groups of nine or ten children at a time who go to a private house and there are trained in the three R's by former public-school teachers or laicized Sisters. This system is now organized in every part of the country.

I have made an effort to ascertain just how many of these clandestine schools are in operation and how many children attend them. By the nature of the case it is hard to find out, for the owners of the homes run the risk under a new law of having their houses confiscated. Besides, another law was passed making it a penal offense to teach the A B C's privately to any child who was just beginning. But of that part later. In Mexico City naturally, a count is more

possible. There the public schools are more frequented, for the number of Government employes is vastly greater, but it is known that 61,000 children are attending the home schools there. In Puebla, not more than thirty-five per cent of the children are in the public schools; the rest are without schooling or in the home schools. In Aguascalientes the percentage is much smaller, according to official Church reports. In Guadalajara, no less than 14 Religious Orders are working in the home schools, with each member in charge of several groups. In the country, conditions vary: thus in the State of Puebla, in some villages there are only three or four children in the public schools, and in others many attend them.

In one district, near San Angel in the Federal District, there were only 27 out of about 300 children in the public schools, according to one who related this to me as an eye-witness. This was too small a percentage to go unnoticed, and the home schools were raided and the houses threatened with confiscation. Whereupon, the schools moved out to the public square, and the parents defied the Government to confiscate that!

In one large city, whose name must be kept secret, a market woman urged the other mothers in the public market place to keep their children out of the Socialist schools. They were afraid of losing their licenses, but she found a way. She had a room at the back of her store, and there with the help of a teacher, she has a school of ten or twelve children. She divides her time between selling vegetables out front, and keeping order in the back.

The secret teachers, too, run their risks. In Culiacan, in the State of Sinaloa, to take one case at random, Señorita Lucrecia Rodriguez, a former school teacher, had several poor pupils daily at her house to give them their schooling gratis. She was arrested, her "school" was padlocked: that is, her house was confiscated; and she received a jail sentence and a heavy fine on the charge of giving free instruction.

From official reports in the various States, I can pick only some of the things that happened. The entire story of these last months in 1935 would make another book. A whole new drive on the registered pastors began on the ground that they were the enemies of Socialist education, who were stiffening the backbone of the people in their resistance to being defanaticized.

Here is one report from the State of Zacatecas. The State Director of Education there announced to the authorities that he could not introduce Socialistic education into the State as long as any priests were left there. This started a new offensive against the Bishop and priests in that rich mining region.

In Villa del Refugio there was very little attendance at the public schools. A conclave of officials was held to devise measures to force the children to attend.

One interesting official suggested that the best thing to do would be to kill three or four of the parents as a lesson to the others; terror would do the rest. This proposition was not accepted because another official urged that due to the present temper of the people the whole population would rise up against the officials and kill them also. Finally, it was resolved to accuse the Pastor of being behind the resistance, and as a result he was compelled to leave the parish.

In another place in the same State, Huizcolco, a teacher was so renowned for her anti-religious teaching that people called her "The Gate of Hell." A group of men who had armed to defend their rights were in the vicinity and sent her a message telling her something very serious would happen to her if she did not change. Instead, she notified the Federal troops, and continued on her way. So the rebels came, caught her on the street with a lasso, and dragged her for two kilometers. Not a pretty story, but since that happened (September, 1935) the teachers in the surrounding places grew so scared that they concentrated in Villanueva.

In Villanueva itself, a little boy told his teacher another boy was saying bad words to him. The teacher answered that there are no bad words, that is all nonsense taught by the priests. The next morning all the boys saluted their teacher with a bad word. She reproved them, out of habit, apparently, but they reminded her of what she had said the day before. This incident does not seem to have improved the discipline of the school, for it is recorded that the children grew so wild she had to give up teaching.

One special aspect of the effort of the Church to carry on as usual under the new persecution against schools concerns the Seminaries for the education of priests.

The record of many of these is heroic. In Zacatecas the Seminarians have been dispersed fifteen times; their property has been confiscated, even their own personal belongings have been taken away from them. And still they persisted in their determination to go on for the priesthood. They would gather in one place, and shortly would have to leave for another. Their last effort was made in 1934, but again the pursuit was upon them and they finally had to go back to their homes.

The Bishop was exiled to Mexico City, and he took the theological students along with him. The Minor Seminary is still in the State, but the students live in private homes, and gather each day in different places for their lessons. There can be little doubt of the soundness of the vocation of these boys. They have already had to suffer for their convictions; they are fully aware of what awaits them when they are ordained. When the police broke into the last place where they lived collectively, they took it very calmly. It was old stuff. The police, in

their slang, remarked: "These boys are well done."

In Puebla there are 126 Seminarians. The Major and Minor Seminaries have both been confiscated. Recently, the authorities got wind of their secret classes, and every Mayor in the State received a circular warning him to be on the lookout for them. The last place they were known to be was Tlaxcala, but they were rooted out of there and the building, a rented one, was confiscated. But I hear that they simply moved off somewhere else.

Of conditions in another State it would be cruel to reveal too much. It might give them away. But I have before me the official report of the Bishop, and it makes engrossing reading. The original Seminary was closed under the Constitution, on the ground that it was not lay education, as Article 3 on education then read. The Bishop drew up a respectful petition to Mexico City, but the only response was to issue an order for his arrest. So the Bishop took his Seminarians to the mountains and went on with their formation as well as he was able.

At present he has twenty-seven studying for the priesthood. Three of these are studying Humanities under a professor in a friendly farmhouse. Three others are studying philosophy in another place. Nine are theological students and are with the Bishop himself in an inaccessible hiding place, and along with them are three beginners in Latin. Nine others, still younger, form a sort of Apostolic school. It might be mentioned that this Bishop is himself a fine theologian, besides being a great heroic figure, and as yet but little publicized abroad.

It will be recalled that Archbishop Orozco of Guadalajara carried on his Seminary in this way during the troubles in 1926-1929. After the troubles the students came back to their Seminary in the city, but in 1932 that was confiscated along with all the furniture. Now 340 of them are working in small groups, as elsewhere, and the places of meeting are often changed to avoid suspicion. An amnesty was granted the Archbishop in December, 1935, but before that he was in hiding in his State, and on one occasion ordained twenty-seven new priests in his hiding place in the hills. He had had great difficulty, also, in maintaining his Minor Seminaries. In September, 1935, one of them, at Totatiche, was confiscated and turned over to the army for a barracks.

Protests began to multiply all over the country. On October 5, 1935, in Chihuahua City, for instance, a town of only 30,000, a long line of 6,000 men and women paraded through the streets for hours in protest against the contemptuous refusal of the local legislature even to consider a memorial against Socialist education signed by 80,000 names, giving, besides signatures, the place of residence and occupation of each signer, from all over the State.

Many of these protests during the course of 1935 were put down by the

military with tragic results, others were carried out in more orderly form. I will take them as they came. The first, and most important, was certainly the parade in Mexico City in June, during the Rotary Convention and organized by the League for the Defense of Religious Liberty. As the Rotarians returned home, they were met by other protests on the road. Thus, for instance, in Aguascalientes, 2,000 people paraded before their hotel carrying banners in Spanish and English demanding religious and other forms of freedom. In Culiacan, in Sonora, another imposing demonstration was made before the Governor's palace. In Amozoc, in Puebla, the whole populace turned out to prevent the closing of the Seminary, but they were quieted by the priest. In Pachuca, the capital of Hidalgo, the citizens petitioned the local legislature to abrogate the law limiting priests to one for every 50,000 inhabitants, as being contrary to the Constitution. At Juarez, in Chihuahua, a great crowd of men, women, and children came out to demand freedom of religion and the restoration of worship. The list is interminable.

In Colima a curious situation arose. While the Governor, Salvador Saucedo, was absent in Mexico City, his State legislature passed a law re-authorizing the twenty priests who had been allowed but had been expelled in 1934. The Governor vetoed the bill by wire, and was answered by a faithful henchman that his followers would "continue without vacillation the defanaticizing work of spiritual emancipation in the interest of the people." In September President Cárdenas visited the city and removed the Governor from office on charges of tampering with an election for Federal Deputy. The President was visited then by a delegation of citizens and promised them that religious liberty would be safeguarded. A new Governor was appointed and he immediately authorized two churches in the capital. Not much else was done, however.

The most powerful protest, however, was the brief in the name of 150,000 members of the Confederation of National Civic Groups, and addressed to the President in October. It was in support of a similar one sent to the President by the Bishops of the country. It was a weighty document, confirmed by legal argument. It pointed out, among other things, that the official Government census showed that 97 per cent of the people are Catholics, and that it was absurd to think that it was in accord with the will of the people to bring about by statute law the practical abrogation of the Constitution which forbids any law abolishing the practice of religion.

The brief was answered on November 2 by Minister of the Interior Silva Barba González. The burden of his reply was to refer to the cruelties of the Inquisition, the former "wealth" of the Church, its one-time "political hegemony," its "opposition to freedom of worship," and its "general disregard of

the law." The legal argument was ignored, except to say that the Supreme Court had passed on all anti-Church legislation. As for the clergy, it "cannot be, or at least never has been, within the elemental concepts of culture on which you now rely in your argumentations." So that was that.

The answer ended by the usual remark that "the Federal Government only requires the clergy and all Catholics to be subject to the law." What the Bishops had done, of course, was to ask that the law be changed.

In view of the constant and unyielding pursuit of every manifestation of religion by the police, and the refusal to entertain any protest, it is not surprising to learn that in many places the people have armed themselves and banded together for their defense. In many places they have answered terror with terror, as the Irish did in their day. Even in Mexico City they have not been complacent. On one afternoon in December, 1935, seven bombs were exploded after school hours against as many public schools in the Capital, and a few days later the attempts were renewed.

It is in the country, however, that the reprisals against Socialist education have been terrible. In Guanajuato, mounted and armed men made sorties against the schools, burning them, and fleeing, according to *La Prensa*, of Mexico City, of December 12, 1935. The teachers in a whole region had to flee to the cities for their lives. In Vera Cruz a rural school was burned on the same day.

Still more terrible, according to the same paper, was the revenge taken on those teachers who were captured. They had their ears cut off. Four of them were thus branded in the State of Durango; in Jalisco a "cultural mission"—a sort of Socialist missionary band—all women, were taken, ten of them, and all had their ears cut off. In Michoacan, two women had this done to them. In Zacatecas, the same thing happened. As a result the Socialist school teachers were fleeing for their lives all over those and other States.

A group of these branded teachers were brought to Mexico City and shown to the President. As a result, General Cárdenas ordered a sort of scholastic martial law, supplying all teachers with rifles and revolvers, and ordering school to be conducted everywhere possible under the guns of the Army or armed guards. I do not know of anything that could make one realize how grim and relentless had grown the battle between a determined Government and an equally determined people.

It was a determination that had been growing a long time. My readers will remember, perhaps, a reel in the "March of Time" which showed a lynching by Mexican villagers of a young man who had gathered the children of the place to teach them that there is no God. That was founded on a true story reported in the American press at the time it happened.

In another place, as early as 1934, where during a class of sexual education unspeakable things were done under the guidance of a teacher, the mother of one of the children lost her reason and the next morning came to the school with a revolver and shot the teacher dead.

Sometimes the drama bordered on the tragi-comic. In one town in Zacatecas it is recorded that in November, 1935, the teacher forced all her pupils to disrobe in the presence of each other, boys and girls together. The next day, one girl, the daughter of the mayor of the town, refused to go to school and only reluctantly was induced to explain why. Her mother told her husband, who went to his cabinet, took out his revolver, and marched down to the school. He called the teacher out, and thus addressed her:

"My daughter disrobes only in the presence of her mother. You have committed an outrage against her. But since that is your new teaching, you should be ready to do it yourself. Take off your clothes, and I will take off mine!" And he flourished his revolver.

The teacher screamed and fainted. She was carried away from there, a nervous wreck.

Meanwhile, as was inevitable, in the universities the struggle over academic liberty was approaching its predestined end. This story is not properly part of the religious struggle, except as it is a corollary of the Amendment of the Constitution imposing Socialistic education on elementary, secondary, and normal-school curricula. That move was certain sooner or later to be reflected in the universities.

The blow came in September. Earlier in the summer the funds of the University of Mexico had fallen so low that the Rector, Dr. Fernando Ocaranza, was forced to appeal to the Government for money to keep the classes open through September. The Secretary of Education, Señor Vasquez Vela, saw his chance. In a radio speech in August he essayed to define Socialistic education, and stressed the impossibility of a difference of doctrines in lower and higher instruction. A Confederation of Socialist Students was hastily formed in opposition to the National Confederation of Students, the regular non-sectarian, non-political body of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students, which was in open revolt against Government control of ideas. On September 12 this new body invaded the principal seat of the University and held it by force. The University was closed at once, and the Rector resigned. The fate of academic liberty hung in the balance.

A new Rector was appointed in two weeks, and classes were resumed. But President Cárdenas, on September 30, announced a plan which would put the universities under Government control at one blow. It was the formation of a

National Council of Higher Education and Scientific Investigation of fifteen, which would have direct control of all subjects taught in class and would be appointed by the Government. This would automatically make Socialism the only recognized teaching in all higher and professional courses. The aim, as the President put it, in somewhat flowery language, was that thus "the general reorganization of higher education will comply with another primordial condition, which is derived from the social orientations of the Mexican Revolution and the binding in of my Government with the interests and aspirations of the national proletariat." The idea of a privileged educated class was to be abolished.

The Rector appealed to the country against the proposed law, and the Students' Confederation answered the President in a long and reasoned argument on October 7. A large number of professors resigned in anticipation of the new law. The law was passed unanimously on October 8 by the Chamber of Deputies. Thus the University of Mexico was left completely alone, for of course it refused to accept the loss of its academic freedom in return for Government support. The professors, including many distinguished scholars who could not be classed as "clericals" in any sense, were left with only the most precarious means for subsistence. The students loyally set on foot a subscription for their support, and they themselves formed at first an academy of research, hoping that various foreign foundations would come to their rescue. Later, however, it was necessarily decided to "atomize" this effort, leaving each Faculty free to secure whatever support it might. How long even this form of academic liberty would be allowed to persist was problematical.

Meanwhile, the Government set up a new Socialist University of its own. The Guadalajara speech of General Calles was taking shape, the National Revolutionary party had stormed the last bulwark of the "consciences and mind of youth."



## CHAPTER XX

### DOOM AND VERDICT

THE HOME had become the final refuge of the Catholic in the practice of his religion. The churches and priests allowed were sufficient for only a small proportion of the population. All private schools had been hunted out and either closed or forced into the Marxist pattern of education. The public schools had been turned into active centers of anti-religious training. Only in the home was it still possible to instruct children in their religion, and in most parts of the Republic even to worship. The home schools and the Eucharistic centers were all that was left of exterior manifestation of the Catholic religion in Mexico. There the Catholic who was heroic enough to take the risks could retire as into a new set of Catacombs.

In August, 1935, even the home was finally invaded in the attempt to wipe it out as the last vestige of religion.

By a decree that has the form and force of law, President Cárdenas promulgated the most astounding piece of legislation that undoubtedly has ever been seen in any country. Under legislative powers granted him by the Congress the previous December, he formulated a long law in 35 articles and 5 transitory provisions, called the Decree on the Nationalization of Church Property. It is worth examining at some length, for it is a striking example of what the religious struggle has come to mean for the people of Mexico—Catholic, Jew, or Protestant.

First of all, every possible kind of property held by or for the Church is made the property of the Government. This means not only the churches themselves, but all rectories, schools, convents, asylums, every "building that

has been built or used for the administration, propagation, or teaching of a religious cult." In Article 2 this is extended even to private houses, and in Article 3 to any property the income on which "is in any way related to religious projects or objects."

Secondly, to effect this nationalization it is not necessary to establish juridical proof. Any circumstance that justifies a "presumption" is sufficient to allow it to be "inferred that the property has been so used." Such a presumption exists against the owner of even a rented property if religious acts of any kind have taken place within or upon it during more than six months. Further provisions make it impossible for any person or corporation to evade this law, by holding property for any religious society. To all presumptions, "no proof to the contrary is admissible."

The process of confiscating these goods is along the same lines. The matter is subtracted from the jurisdiction of the courts and is vested in the Executive alone. Any private person can denounce the suspected property. If the presumption is found to be present, a temporary order by the Ministry of Finance is issued, and occupation for the public services of the State shall follow immediately (Articles 19, 21). Evidence is then heard by the Ministry (Article 25), and the final order shall follow within ten days. Rewards are provided for those who denounce such properties (Article 33). No appeals are allowed on a final order, unless the facts alleged "are posterior to the former order" (Article 31). The Supreme Court has already decided that the Government's decision is final.

Thus a complete and impregnable network is finally wound around any owner of property who holds or allows to be held on his premises any act of worship or teaching of religion. No exception is made for parents teaching their own children, or holding prayers in common in the family. Book-stores selling religious books fall under the law. Any home that once had a chapel in it, and there are many in the wealthier Mexican families, is presumed by Article 2 to be a place of worship. The Church had finally retreated into the home; it was followed there and routed out.

It is not quite clear why the Government went to all the trouble of writing out this law, for it already had the physical power through the army of effecting its purposes without any subterfuge. The Constitution itself made the law invalid in many respects. As Father John J. Burke, C.S.P., pointed out at the time, Article 9, guaranteeing peaceable assembly; Article 14, guaranteeing the right to life, liberty, and property; Article 16, guaranteeing the inviolability of the home; Article 27, guaranteeing security against confiscation; Article 130, forbidding the Congress to establish or forbid the practice of any religion whatsoever, were

all violated by this decree. To this it may be added that it marked the end of the Constitutional regime in Mexico, for it finally put an end to the traditional division of powers between the executive, the legislative, and the judicial on which the Mexican Constitutional system has always rested.

This revolution, and the means by which it was accomplished, went without practically any notice in the world press. Yet it is the most significant event that has happened there in many years.

The Bishops immediately drew up a long and moderately worded petition to the President, asking for the abrogation of the law, and of the other anti-religious provisions of former decrees and of the Constitution itself. They had no hope of any redress in doing this, but they were determined to act out to the end the orders of the Pope to proceed entirely in accord with constitutional methods, yet to let no single act of the Government against the rights of religion and religious people go without a dignified protest. The petition was backed up by the brief mentioned in the preceding chapter, and the signatures of 150,000 members of the Confederation of the National Civic Groups. Nothing was received in answer but the insults of Barba González, bringing up the old charges of a hundred years ago.

At the same time, the Bishops multiplied their activity in document after document addressed to their people and designed to uphold their morale and instruct them in their duties.

The Apostolic Delegate, as was his duty, from his place of exile in San Antonio, Texas, constantly warned his people of the dangers of conscience to which they were exposed. Already in July, he had said: "I think that President Cárdenas has lost his chance to be the peacemaker of Mexico, since, though he has apparently broken with General Calles, he has not with the National Revolutionary party, and because of this, the people of Mexico is bound to be the victim of Socialistic dreamers who work in behalf of the proletariat, and look for justice without charity, outside of Christ." In August he addressed another letter to all priests warning them to instruct the people of their obligation in conscience to avoid the Socialistic type of education. In September, he issued a new statement on the Catholic attitude toward social reform: "Catholics," he said, "must condemn any laws that interfere with religious freedom or that authorize confiscation or expropriation without indemnity. Catholics must disapprove the injection of agrarian and labor problems into politics." He then added these sad and brave words:

"It may be asserted that the Church in Mexico has ceased to function; but the Catholics of Mexico are alive, and with the help of God will oppose to atheistic and sexual education as well as to the materialistic philosophy imposed

by the laws a passive resistance to the 'God-State' such as that which made the Martyrs the fathers of sane and true liberty."

Meanwhile, in Mexico City, a group of Bishops who were held there by the Government in virtual imprisonment in private houses formed themselves into a committee headed by the Archbishop of Oaxaca. From them issued several documents of great dignity and value. The first of these was the careful statement of the position of the Church on social reform to which I have referred in [Chapter XVI](#). This was at the same time an answer to charges of neglect in that field and an exhortation to Catholics to keep high before their minds, in spite of difficulties, the social mission of the Gospel.

In October another important document appeared from the Episcopal Committee. It was an exhortation to all citizens to exercise their civic duties. Just as if there were no gun held at the head of all Catholics the Bishops furnished them with full instructions as to their duties in the modern state. "Catholics must work actively in the civic as well as in the political field to obtain full religious liberty together with other liberties, assured that the National Episcopacy will leave them at full liberty as long as they do not depart from the immutable norms of justice and morality, and preserve due discipline." Admirable words at any time; but the outsider might well ask how this was to be done, since any form of political activity in opposition to the aims of the Revolution was forbidden and forcibly repressed in Mexico's new totalitarian State.

Finally, in December, the Bishops' Committee issued a new pastoral, this time on education. This was the pressing point in the consciences of Mexican Catholics. Nothing in this story will have been more impressive, or more contrary to preconceived notions, than the dogged persistence with which Mexican Catholics generally prized education. Yet the only education now possible legally, and in most places physically, was a type of instruction that was repugnant to all the spiritual and social traditions of the Christian religion.

With obvious pain, the Bishops unflinchingly told their people the truth. It was a grave obligation of conscience to stay away from such education, and parents who keep their children in Socialistic schools are "committing a grave mortal sin which cannot be absolved in Confession until the children are removed from these establishments." Thus, by their very act, necessary but agonizing, the Bishops themselves were forced to bring home to the inner spiritual consciousness of all Mexicans the bitter struggle that was going on on the face of the country. It was no political motive that inspired these shepherds; it was the sharp pang of logic and conscience. Not since the Irish and the English during Penal days had any Catholic population been faced with the cruel dilemma of losing its faith, or condemning itself to the position of uneducated

and illiterate helots.

The further, and more difficult problem still, whether parents who refused to obey were to be cut off from the communion of the Church by an act of excommunication, the Bishops wisely left to another time.

After this Pastoral, the national congress of teachers in Mexico City in December had made it abundantly clear that the Socialism of the Government's schools was of the genuinely Marxist kind. Hence in January, 1936, the Bishops returned to the charge, and made the necessary prohibitions clear and more definite. Understanding by Socialism "that philosophical, economic, or social system which in some form does not recognize the rights of God and the Church or the natural right which every man has to possess the goods which he has acquired by his labor or legitimately inherited, or which foments hatred and the class struggle," they proceeded to state that no Catholic can adhere to the system, or teach it, or write in its favor, or be subjected to an education based on it. Hence they gave concrete norms to be followed by parents, teachers, students, and priests, in regard to the Socialist schools.

The mild provisions of the Pastoral are an evidence of the extremity to which the Church was forced, and the sympathy which animated the Prelates for the Faithful in their impossible dilemma.

Meanwhile, the outside world had begun to take cognizance of the condition of affairs in Mexico in a way that had never before been remarked. Already in January, 1935, Senator Borah had introduced into the American Senate a resolution to investigate the denial of religious liberty to which Americans in Mexico might be subjected by reason of the anti-religious legislation. In view of the known fact that Americans who might happen to live in fourteen States in Mexico were *ipso facto* denied the right of freedom to worship, and those in the other States severely hampered, it might have been supposed that there would be little opposition to the resolution. There was, however, and the resolution lay dormant in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee until the end of the session.

A group in the House of Representatives interested themselves in the question, and a series of resolutions was introduced into the House, in presenting which Congressmen Higgins, of Massachusetts; Fenerty, of Pennsylvania; McKeough, of Illinois; Boylan, Fish, and Celler, of New York, were particularly active. This group, including Catholics, Jews, and Protestants, finally secured the signatures of 226 members, a clear majority of the House, to a petition to the President himself, asking him for an expression on religious liberty in Mexico. This was particularly urgent at the time, in that the American Ambassador to Mexico, Mr. Josephus Daniels, was accused of having gone out of his way

several times to support the Mexican regime. In response to the petition, President Roosevelt issued a statement condemning religious persecution "wherever exercised." He could not be induced to mention Mexico by name, but in view of the circumstances, the fact of his statement was itself a sufficient indication of the importance which he attached to a public opinion rapidly forming in the United States.

During the Spring of 1935, the American Committee on Religious Rights and Minorities, a non-sectarian group, sent a commission to Mexico consisting of Prof. Philip Marshall Brown, William Franklin Sands, and Carl Sherman, Protestant, Catholic, and Jew, respectively, to investigate the situation. Their report, issued later in the summer, was an unanimous agreement that there does exist a persecution in Mexico, and that this persecution takes the form of laws designed to make religious worship and instruction impossible throughout the Republic.

At the same time, supported by these facts, the Knights of Columbus on several occasions called the attention of the country to what was going on, by successive letters to President Roosevelt scoring the silence of the United States in the face of the denial of liberty in a neighboring country which depends for its very existence on the good will of the United States Government. The final reply of the President in November was a sharp refusal to "intervene" in another country's domestic affairs. This was countered by the Knights by replying that what was wanted was not intervention, but a cessation of the protection behind which the Mexican officials had always shielded themselves, and a disassociation by our Government from the acts of Mexico.

Meanwhile another voice, an impartial one, had raised itself. Dr. Charles S. Macfarland, General Secretary Emeritus of the Federal Council of Churches, also went to Mexico during 1935. Dr. Macfarland had been friendly to the revolutionary regime because he was attracted by its social program. What he found in Mexico, however, on his latest visit, namely, what has been narrated in the last few chapters of this book, caused him to take a strong stand on the religious question, and he put it into his book, "Chaos in Mexico."

Dr. Macfarland set himself two questions: "Does the State in Mexico suppress religious liberty?" And, "Is the Mexican State persecuting the Church?" He answers both questions affirmatively, on the evidence. On the point of religious liberty, he answers:

"If that is the question at issue, then there can be but one opinion. There are two matters on which, as an objective and candid narrator, I am obligated to be more than a mere fact finder, regardless of the consequences. The State is interfering with the 'spiritual functions' of the Church and of the Catholic

worshiper. *The State is suppressing religious liberty*, when it closes the worshiper's church, when it deprives him of his priest, when it shuts religion from his home, both as teaching and as ministrations. It suppresses religious liberty to the Church as an institution, not only by these same restraints, but by its destruction of the Church's identity and by the demolition of its organization." (The italics are Dr. Macfarland's.)

To the second question about persecution, he answers:

"Is not that question answered sufficiently when I pass the beautiful Cathedral and find flaming posters of the State plastered on its walls attacking it in violent terms as an institution, or when I go into a church and find it filled with cartoons, some of them vile caricatures of religion itself? Is it not answered when the Government goes into the Cathedral, makes trash heaps of altars and crucifixes, and pastes seals on its paintings of the Madonnas and in the Church offices on the typewriters, certifying that they are the property of the Government? Is it not answered when the 'Red Shirts,' even though not authorized, are permitted to invade church property in riotous manner? It is idle to discuss this question. Even a hasty review of this volume makes it perfectly clear that *the Mexican State is persecuting the Church*. For the Foreign Secretary and the Ambassador to the United States to reiterate denials is as disingenuous as it is inept." (Again the italics are the Doctor's.)<sup>1</sup>

This was the consensus of opinion of every outsider who visited Mexico during those days.

From South America came the same story. In a remarkable document, the Center of Religious Studies addressed a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile and the Ambassadors of the two other A B C Powers, Brazil and Argentina, in which the signers, 81 of the principal citizens of Chile, ask those officials to use the good offices of their Governments to bring about a cessation of the attack on the Church in Mexico. "For more than ten years," they record, "that country has declared a war without quarter on the national religion, Catholicism, the spiritual inheritance of all Spanish America. The Catholic Church in Mexico and the Mexican Catholics have since 1924 been the victims of the most implacable religious persecution in the annals of the continent."

They then remind their readers that when the Mexican revolution was seeking the recognition of Carranza, Robert Lansing, Secretary of State of the United States, had required the Mexican representative to answer the question: "What will be the attitude of the Constitutionalist Government with regard to the Catholic Church?" and that recognition was not recommended until that Government gave a promise of liberty of worship on October 8, 1915. Mr. Lansing then invited the Ambassadors of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, and the

Ministers of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Guatemala, to join him in an accord granting recognition. The Chilean document concludes:

"The good offices of Your Excellency's Government, united to those of the other American Governments, can work great good in this sense and bring back religious liberty to the millions of Mexican Catholics who today do not enjoy it. The prudent action of Mr. Lansing, which in no way offended the dignity of the Mexican Government in 1915, can serve as a precedent for those new approaches which present circumstances render more urgent and more necessary."

The appeal is signed by four former Cabinet members, twelve Senators and former Senators, eleven Deputies and former Deputies, almost twenty members of the bar, and numerous members of the medical profession, educators, publishers, and civic leaders.



## CHAPTER XXI

### DECENCY SAYS FAREWELL

FOUR OR FIVE TIMES, during the two months preceding the writing of this book, Mexican laymen—a university professor, an engineer, a lawyer, a lady owner of former riches, a gentleman farmer who was once rich in lands—have sat by my desk, and all said the same thing:

"Father, all decency has gone out of Mexican life today."

That seems to me to be the fate that has invaded the beautiful lands that have only the mute monuments of the past to speak of what was once the glory of Mexico, "the spiritual inheritance of all Spanish America," as the protest from Chile has it. And even most of the monuments are now turned into baser uses: stables for the soldiery, cinemas, labor halls, warehouses, and the like.

I have before me two copies of *La Prensa*, a secular daily of Mexico City, for January 29 and 31, 1936. The Mexican who brought them out to me said with tears in her eyes:

"Read just the headlines of these, and you will see the tragic state of my country."

I glance at them all: School Teachers on Strike throughout the Nation . . . Political Crimes in Zacatecas Continue . . . Causes of the Strike in Tabasco . . . Calles Protests against Communist Occupation of His Lands . . . Strike on the Southern Pacific R.R. . . . Campaign against Vice Centers near Labor Union Centers . . . The Archbishop of Puebla Thrown out of His House (with picture) . . . Strike of Oil Workers in El Ebano . . . Heavy Earthquake in Oaxaca . . . Monterey Invaded by Agitation Common to Whole Country . . . Garrido Still Rules Tabasco . . . Taxes Increase in Vera Cruz . . . Reign of Terror in Nayarit . . .

Persecution of Government Employes in Tamaulipas; Followers of Portes Gil Expel All Dissidents.

That is the grist of news for January 29. For January 31, these are the headlines:

The National Anthem Suppressed in Merida, Yucatan . . . Serious and Bloody Clashes in Oaxaca . . . Teachers of Tamaulipas Go on Strike . . . Young Belle Commits Suicide . . . Arms Factory Closed by Workers . . . Inquiry into Bloody Clashes in Torreon . . . Mayor and Councilors of Jerez Saved from Lynching . . . Nayarit Invaded by Group of Gunmen . . . Federal Troops Abolish Political Group in Tabasco . . . Teachers in Puebla Take Part in Today's Strike . . . Rebel Party Penetrates Yanca, Jal. . . . Left-wing Student Group Will Fight for Dialectical Materialism . . . National Chamber of Labor Breaks with Portes Gil . . . Catholics Demand Remission of Tax on Bell Ringing . . . Delicate Political Situation in Tamaulipas.

The reader will admit that to take up one's morning paper and see nothing but that kind of news is depressing. But perhaps when everything else is lost it does not make much difference. The disruption of life in Mexico has gone far beyond the loss of religion. As refugees from Mexico invariably put it, decency itself has departed.

I try to imagine to myself what life for the average family is. If it owned any lands, and had grown up in the gracious hacienda existence of the last century, all that former comfort is gone. It must support a Socialist school on its own lands for its farm workers. It has seen the village church closed and pillaged. If it had once a chapel in the house, and probably did, it is now at the mercy of any informer who may want to win the reward for denouncing it. And over it hangs the shadow of the partition of lands, which has been proceeding apace under General Cárdenas. In Jalisco, the richest territory, practically all private farms had been confiscated by the end of January, 1936, and put into the hands of political committees, who will work them for the peasants. The owners are impoverished and living in the cities with impoverished relatives, and hundreds of their young men are in the hills with the "bandits," as the press always dubs them.

If the family are city people, they probably entertain ten or twelve children every day for a home school if they have a home large enough. This means that the place can be confiscated by any informer who finds it out. In places where there are no churches there is probably a sacred niche somewhere in the house where they may go each day and administer to themselves the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Their priest slinks in by night, disguised as a workman, to hear their confessions, baptize their children, marry, anoint, say the last prayers, etc.

If he is caught he will be imprisoned, and they will have to pay his fine; if they are caught they will lose their home. They even have to hide all religious objects for fear of frequent inspections. Probably one at least of their boys is also somewhere out in the hills.

If the family is poor or lower middle class in the world's goods, the workers have to join a radical labor union or there is no living to be gained. Their children are in public schools and being taught that there is no God and that the Boss and the Priest are enemies of humanity. If there is a school teacher in the family she must conduct sexual and Socialist education or she loses her job. If one of the family has a position with the Government, it is impossible for any of them ever to be seen in church and he or she may have to turn out at frequent intervals to join in an anti-church or anti-capitalist demonstration. If the boy is going to college, he must go to a Socialist faculty or he will get no professional rating after his studies.

Over all this stands the ever-pressing poverty of the nation, and the political insecurity of a country to which Dr. Macfarland in the summer of 1935 well gave the title of "Chaos."

But let me tell it in some detail, with stories picked and presented with no art, but taken almost at random from the official archives of the Church and never originally meant for publication.

Miss Rosa Llaguna rented her property for the Seminary of Leon in Guanajuato. It was her only asset. It was confiscated because of its tenants, and she is now in poverty. Mrs. Teresa Mora, Ave. 13, Poniente 111, Puebla, rented her place for a house for fallen girls, *Casa de Regeneracion*. It was a Catholic institution and the property was confiscated. Mrs. Peon del Valle, living at 13 Sadi Carnot, Mexico City, a beautiful residence, had it taken away from her because there was an old chapel inside and thus it became *ipso facto* Government property.

Francisco Velasco was the possessor of the famous old colonial mansion in Puebla, a lovely gem of art that is always pointed out to tourists. He allowed his brother Knights of Columbus to meet in the cellar, they were caught, and his house was taken from him. Two old ladies, the Misses Mendivil, in Durango, received into their house some religious works of art belonging to a priest when he had to leave, in order to preserve them. Police came, took everything that was there, turned them out of their home, and left them without a cent. Friends have had to take them in and care for them. In Saltillo, Miss Trinidad B. Murillo was passing along the street when a friend handed her some religious leaflets and pamphlets. She was caught with them on her before she got home, and as if she were in possession of deadly narcotics, she was imprisoned, and fined 1,000

pesos.

In Gomez Palacio, in Durango, a group of Catholics praying in a private home were suddenly surprised by the police. The prayers were being led by a mailman, Apolinar Alvarado. He was cruelly whipped and otherwise tortured to make him reveal the whereabouts of a priest. "You see what it means to be a Catholic?" he was constantly taunted. He was robbed of his belongings, fined fifty pesos, and was for months an invalid as a result of his treatment. This was on May 18, 1935.

In Durango itself, Candelario Ruiz and Aureliano Hernandez were taken out of their house and imprisoned for the sole reason that they were Catholics. On February 22, 1935, they were taken out and without a trial set against a wall and shot. The list of Catholic lay people who thus suffered is interminable, and some day will be revealed in all its fulness when the history of the Church during these days will fill many volumes.

In Totatiche, in Jalisco, an incident of another kind occurred. F. J. Torres, a small landholder, was taken to prison with five others and was threatened with shooting if he did not reveal where the priest was who had been in the vicinity. He refused to say anything. Then he was taken to the prison yard and the soldiers lined up as if to shoot him. The Captain again asked him the whereabouts of the priest. He said he did not know and that even if he did he would not tell. He was blindfolded and the soldiers ordered to prepare to shoot him. He knelt down, he says in a letter, and made his act of contrition, and offered his life to God for his sins and for the Church. The Captain then spoke to him and said that if he would hand over the keys to the little farm he had, he would be freed. Mr. Torres was ready to die for the Church but not for his property. He gave the keys to the Captain, and at two o'clock in the morning he was set free.

It is perhaps characteristic that art in any religious form seems to bring out the worst in the persecutors. Two instances may be culled from the reports.

Mariano Bello had a beautiful house in Puebla in which he indulged in the harmless hobby of collecting antiquities. He maintained a little museum in it where he kept with great love many religious masterpieces in art and sacred objects. The police broke into his house and took away everything he had of a religious character. Nothing he could do was enough to get back his property. He was lucky to retain his house.

José Ortega Espinosa was another art collector who suffered for his hobby. His beautiful old residence at Cuba 88 was filled with old masters of Europe and Mexico and many artistic religious objects. The whole collection was taken from him by the police without any warrant, and now tourists gaze on it on the walls of the Convent of San Agustin Acolmán, a Government museum. He received no

compensation for his pictures, and reports that he even found when the police left that many other valuables from his house had disappeared with them, along with all loose cash.

Of course, if members of the family have gone out in open rebellion against Governmental exactions, all the rest of the kin are subject to every kind of reprisal. What property can be found is usually confiscated and all relatives who may be earning a living working for the Government are immediately discharged. Now, of course, the same course is extended to any kind of religious manifestation. A lawyer of Mexico City, whose name cannot be divulged but who is worthy of all credence, reports that in a month and a half after the law of confiscation of August, 1935, more than 4,000 cases of confiscation of property for religious purposes were already on the official records.

The case of one family of which I know is especially pathetic, and though it happened in 1927, it is worth recording here as symptomatic of what is beginning to happen again. The Chowell family in Guanajuato City consisted of ten children and the father, Rafael Chowell, the mother having died some time before. The younger children were cared for by two elder sisters. Mr. Chowell, the son of English settlers, and a Catholic, had stayed outside the armed defense, but was accused nevertheless. Arrested, he was held incommunicado. Then the two housekeeper sisters were taken to prison and kept there for about a month, leaving the younger children alone to be cared for by friends and relatives. When the two sisters got out of prison, they learned that their father had been executed early one morning somewhere between Leon and Guanajuato.

Out of many, I will take one diocese and try to give a picture of what has happened to it, from the reports in the office of the Apostolic Delegate.

The diocese of Leon in Guanajuato is one of the most Catholic in the country. It is the one which has placed in a special niche of honor, beside Anacleto Flores González of Guadalajara, the famous "boys of Leon," who were done to death on the eve of the armed defense on January 2, 1927: José Valencia Gallardo, Salvador Vargas, Ezequiel Gomez, Nicolas Navarro, and Agustin Rios. The last was a child of fifteen, and showing some fear when he was captured, he was rallied by Gallardo to die like a hero. Gallardo's tongue was cut out to keep him quiet, and they all died like heroes, those who could crying with their last breath: *Viva Cristo Rey!*

Here is the martyrology of Leon.

Besides this heroic five, sixteen other laymen are on the roll of honor for having sacrificed their lives during those days, and three for being sent to the Islas Marias. Along with them are the names of ten priests who also suffered death for the Faith at the same time. Nineteen houses of Sisters are on the roll—

the Religious being arrested, dispersed, or sent into exile. Twenty-two colleges, convents, schools, and rectories were lost, taken by the Government. The diocese had already lost all its lands, on which it depended for its income, in 1915-1916. Next comes the list of eighteen gentlemen, all but one from Leon and the other from Irapuato, and nearly all Knights of Columbus, who suffered imprisonment, exile, or fines. Next a group of young lady catechists of Catholic Action who twice have been arrested en masse. And finally fourteen young men of the A. C. J. M., who have been put in prison in recent months.

For the present situation, here is what I find recorded by the Bishop at the end of 1935.

No less than 70 colleges and schools had been closed by the Government, 25 of them colleges and academies conducted by Sisters for young ladies. The only reason given for their closing was that they were Catholic institutions and would not accept sexual or Socialist educational curricula.

The National Union of Fathers of Families had kept the school strike "in all its rigor," except in three parishes, which had not been organized. None of the members' children are in the Socialist schools. As for the public-school teachers, 83 out of the 105 in Leon refused to accept the Government program, and lost their jobs rather than go on. The same proportion occurred in other parts of the diocese. All of these teachers were put to work teaching in the "home schools," and their support arranged as best it might. Thus the children without regular schooling were being instructed by professionals, while the public schools found it extraordinarily difficult to find any teachers at all to take the place of those who had resigned. Even when they did, the new teachers and those who stayed on were very prudent about actually putting the Socialist curriculum into effect. "At most," the report reads, "there were one or two cases of Socialist instruction with courses in 'sexual' in which badly disposed teachers had yielded to the wishes of the Government, but *they were punished by the people of the locality.*"

As for the workers, only three of the former Catholic labor unions had survived, for they had received official sanction under one pretext or another, and few of the workers' round tables were functioning as well as was desired. All workers in the diocese had been coerced into the official unions by main force. The only way they were reached was by religious societies attached to the churches. Thus the Apostleship of Prayer of the Church of the Santuario has more than 5,000 members. The practice of Nocturnal Adoration described in the first chapter of this book was flourishing in ten parishes of the diocese, principally among country people numbering several thousand. Seven Temperance societies also were worthy of mention for having maintained a normal existence and done much good. The Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul,

the Catholic relief society par excellence, the "Vassals of *Cristo Rey*," and the Perpetual Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament for men, were also normal. Several round tables for workers and young people were also functioning.

Thus the reader can with a little imagination picture for himself a diocese in which conditions are not too bad, yet which is almost completely crippled in its regular work of religious work and instruction. Regular worship at church is impossible for most of the people, for only 19 priests are allowed for nearly 500,000 people. This means that about 450,000 Catholics never get to Mass and rarely if at all to the Sacraments. Eucharistic Centers are available for those who cannot, and though not allowed to function in their ministry legally, not a single one of the 160 priests of the diocese has left his post, except three who were exiled for "propaganda." What do they do? They carry on like their brothers elsewhere in Mexico, and simply await the day of their arrest for what they are doing, and possibly death or exile.

What can anybody in Mexico do about it? Nothing. As long as the Army is in the hands of the Government, Mexicans are as powerless as were the Irish for centuries with English garrisons in their cities and towns, or as are the citizens in any modern totalitarian State in the face of the private armies of the dictators.

It is true that once in a while a split appears in the ranks. On December 13, General Calles arrived back in Mexico City from exile by airplane, and a well-authenticated rumor had it that he was expecting the overthrow of Cárdenas on the 15th. General Cárdenas simply threw out of the Army all Generals who sympathized with the former dictator, expelled his followers from the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, and declared that Calles himself was no longer a member of the National Revolutionary party which he had himself founded.

In February, 1936, Cárdenas was on a balcony in Monterey reviewing labor battalions singing the Internationale and raising the clenched fist, which is now the world sign of the united front of Communists and Socialists. "We are not Communists," declared the President, "we are Socialists." Let Stalin, who also calls himself a Socialist, make out of that what he will.

Two last incidents may be recorded.

The press reports in February, 1936, that the Revolution is at last about to allow woman suffrage in Mexico, but—only those women are to be allowed to vote who are regularly enrolled members of the National Revolutionary party. It seems that the example of Spain in 1934 showed that when all women are made citizens and vote, they register their ballots overwhelmingly against radicalism and religious persecution. So only those in favor of these two things will be allowed to vote in Mexico.

The other item is that the Mexican Government, at the request of the

American Government, had signified its adherence to the Wild Life Conference's program for the protection of "ducks, geese, and wild mammals."



## CHAPTER XXII

### EPILOGUE

WITH AS MUCH DETAIL as I can authenticate or personally trust, I have told the story of the Mexican people in its ten-year struggle with its Government for the possession of its rights of conscience. As far as possible, I have tried to let the story tell itself. Comment is impertinent beside the reality.

But it is not out of place in this last chapter for the author to join his reader in musing over the inner meaning, the causes, and the probable outcome of this conflict. The nature of the struggle is well known, and this knowledge is perhaps more widely extended throughout the world now than ever before. The fact of such a situation existing anywhere on the earth must necessarily be a matter of extreme concern to anyone possessed of a love of liberty or culture. It is another thing to understand what it means.

It will not do to dismiss the facts as merely the doings of a set of barbarians whom we cannot change and who will be little affected by what we think of them. There is in Mexico a class of people who are as cultured and educated in the cosmopolitan sense as can be found anywhere in the world. Moreover, Mexico has a past of elevated living, of artistic production, of book making, of great building and painting and sculpture that surpasses anything that has existed in the Western Hemisphere. Yet the fact remains that year by year the decencies of life have been lowered progressively to such an extent that even finely nurtured youths and girls prefer to ride to the hills, live in rude camps, shoot and be killed, and be called bandits rather than suffer the sight of the loss of every gracious thing in life they have been taught to love.

Two things in public life in Mexico are not denied by anybody on either

side to the debate. One is the teaching of a radical social-economic doctrine under the name of the Mexican Revolution. The other is the simultaneous enrichment of the Generals and politicians who preached that doctrine.

It is perfectly well known now that men like former Presidents Calles and Rodriguez, as did General Obregon in his own time, stand among the richest in Mexico in lands and industrial control. If there was any concealment of that fact before, there can be none any longer, for it is the burden of General Cárdenas' opposition to them that Calles and his followers preached the uplifting of the poor and the division of lands among the peons, and themselves became the richest in money and the largest owners of land. In fact, the former concentration of lands which took place among the old revolutionaries of the Juarez regime who followed Porfirio Diaz into power and against which the Carranza revolution was directed, had merely been duplicated by a similar concentration in the hands of Carranza's successors. It is one axiom true of Mexico that history there always repeats itself. And it is because Cárdenas is proceeding to distribute the wealth of the Calles and Obregon following that Calles is today in opposition to him.

Was, then, the Revolution merely money-grubbing hypocrisy? No. There was always among the followers of Calles what may be called an idealistic wing which really believed the doctrines that it preached. This wing was and is powerful and vocal. It is now solidly behind Cárdenas. It has had a heritage of radicalism that goes back to 1820. It centers in the political Masonic lodges which have affiliations with the Grand Orient of France. But time and again it has seen the realists come out of the Army and grab the prizes before its eyes. Yet it was always to the political advantage of the realists to sue for its backing. When that happened, no moderate in the party dared raise his voice in protest under penalty of being called a reactionary and expelled from power. Cárdenas, if he keeps his present form of 1935 and the first months of 1936, will turn out to be the only simonpure idealist radical who achieved power and was able to hold it. It is his sincerity which makes him dangerous.

Now the Church was bound to fall foul of this movement on both counts. The radical philosophy was the negation of Christianity in its social and spiritual aspects together, and the realist occupation of despotic power was repugnant to its moral teaching. The hypocrisy which preached Communism and practised capitalism was its natural enemy.

Yet force has always been the sole source of power in Mexico. Spain won the land by force, and held it through her army. When Spain was weakened by the Napoleonic Wars and the degeneration of the Bourbon court, it lost Mexico to its own colonials. These in turn knew no other way of controlling a large

Indian population, the majority of the people, than by armed force. No successor of the first revolutionists has known any other way. Political democracy, except in its external forms, never touched Mexico. Yet it is because foreigners have always obstinately persisted in looking on Mexico as a democracy that they so invariably misunderstood it, or even wonder how a determined military oligarchy can so long control the great majority. Maybe the rise of the modern dictatorships will result in their enlightenment on this point.

As Bishop Francis C. Kelley has shown in his masterly historical study, "Blood-Drenched Altars," the root of the religious conflict lies back in Spanish colonial days. Far from the Church controlling Mexico at any time, it was the other way around—the State held the Church in a state of vassalage. All ecclesiastical power was concentrated in the Crown; the Bishops, who were appointed by the King, had only to administer the Sacraments and teach Christian doctrine. Pastor, in his "History of the Popes," has shown from the archives that it was only by the most delicate diplomacy and forbearance that Rome succeeded in keeping Spain of the days of Philip II from going the way of secession taken by England under Henry VIII.

The royal right of the *Patronato* was not admitted by the Church to have descended to republican Mexico. That, as Bishop Kelley has shown, is the ultimate source of all the grief. In one form or another Mexican Governments have always demanded the right to rule the Church as it was ruled by the Spanish kings. From the very beginning and to the present, the regime of Diaz not excepted, it has been the misfortune of the Church to be in the position of refusing to be ruled by Mexico's republican government. It was Calles who in 1926 brought the century-old debate to a climax.

This demonstration, purely historical in its nature and depending for its truth on historical documents, is not, however, all the story.

There is one sense in which the Church has always been in a position of apparent power in Mexico. At least ninety-five per cent of Mexico's inhabitants are Catholics. Their philosophy of life, not merely their religious practice, is Catholic and is taught to them by the Catholic Church.

Now this religious philosophy of life is all-inclusive; it affects the home, the school, the courts, the legislature, the executive, business, letters, art, everything. It is based on the Kingship of Christ over all men and on His Revelation. On the other hand, the modern so-called "lay" philosophy of government, sometimes improperly called separation of Church and State, demands that no philosophy but its own, no religion especially, have any influence in political matters over the minds of the citizens. That is why clashes between Church and State occur only in Catholic countries where the bulk of the population is Catholic. They are

especially bitter when the prevailing "lay" State is radical.

Apologists for the Mexican Government, like Emilio Portes Gil, in speaking of the "control" of the State by the Church, seem not to understand the real meaning of their words. Actual control, in the persons of clerics or practical Catholics in power, has been non-existent for a century or more in Mexico. What they really mean is that they will not tolerate the existence in a "lay" State of any Church which teaches a philosophy of life which is so all-inclusive as Catholic Christianity, and so contradictory of their own radicalism. The modern State, if it is logical, necessarily tends to be totalitarian and absolute.

That is why the first attempt of the radicals under Calles was to turn the Mexican Church into a national church, and why, having failed in that, they went on to the two further phases of the conflict: the assault on the inner, sacramental life of the Church, and later the attempted capture of the intellects of the young.

Thus by the very logic of their acts, they have been forced into the recognized position of attempting the destruction of the Catholic Church, which in Mexico means the destruction of religion.

Will they succeed? I leave it to my readers to judge.

- <sup>1</sup> U. S. Cath. Hist. Soc. 1930.
- <sup>1</sup> See "Chaos in Mexico" (p. 217 ff.), by Dr. Charles S. Macfarland, who remarks a change, however, in later years.
- <sup>1</sup> "Mexico and Its Heritage," p. 328. D. Appleton-Century Company.
- <sup>1</sup> *Dwight Morrow. A Biography.* By Harold Nicolson, pp. 319-320. Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935.
- <sup>1</sup> *La Prensa*, Mexico, D.F., December 6, 1935.
- <sup>1</sup> The letter was published all over the United States. *Diario de El Paso*. January 4.
- <sup>2</sup> *Revista Católica*, El Paso, Texas, October 17, 1927.
- <sup>1</sup> Biography, page 294.
- <sup>2</sup> Biography, page 343.
- <sup>1</sup> Reprinted in photo process by the United States Historical Society, in 1928.
- <sup>2</sup> See Cuevas, *Historia de la Iglesia en Mexico*, Vol. V, Book III, chap. 1, where a complete account of this transaction is presented out of official records.
- <sup>3</sup> "Mexican Maze," pp. 315-316.
- <sup>1</sup> Stephenson, "John Lind of Minnesota," p. 301.
- <sup>2</sup> See for instance, Gruening, "Mexico and Its Heritage," pp. 114-118.
- <sup>3</sup> "Seventy Years of Life and Labor," p. 312.
- <sup>4</sup> P. 472.
- <sup>5</sup> Nicolson, p. 332.
- <sup>1</sup> *N. C. W. C. Bulletin*, July, 1929, pp. 5, 31.
- <sup>1</sup> J. Dee, "A City without a Priest," *America*, July 6, 1935.
- <sup>1</sup> "Chaos in Mexico," p. 185.
- <sup>1</sup> It was of this club that Carleton Beals said it was "corrupting all Mexico City." *Nation*, April 10, 1935, p. 415.
- <sup>1</sup> "Chaos in Mexico," pages 261-263. Harper and Brothers. 1935. \$2.00.